The Unknown Revolution, 1917–1921. Book Two. Bolshevism and

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Part I: Two Conceptions of the Revolution

Chapter 1. Two Opposing Conceptions of Social Revolution

Our principal task herein is to examine and establish, to the extent of our ability, what is unknown or little known about the Russian Revolution.

We begin by emphasizing a fact which, without being ignored, is considered only superficially in the western world. This: *In October, 1917, this revolution entered upon wholly new terrain — that of the great Social Revolution.* Thus it advanced on a very special route which was totally unexplored.

It follows that the subsequent development of the Revolution assumed an equally new and original character. Therefore, our account will not resemble any of the existing histories of that revolt. Its general appearance, the factors it comprised, its very language, will change, taking on an unaccustomed and singular aspect.

We go on to another fact which is less well known, and which for many readers will be unexpected. In the course of the crises and failures which followed one another up to the revolution of 1917, *Bolshevism was not the only conception of how the Social Revolution should be accomplished*. Without speaking of the left Social Revolutionary doctrine, resembling Bolshevism in its political, authoritarian, statist, and centralist character, nor of several other small similar currents, *a second fundamental idea, likewise envisaging a full and integral social revolution, took shape and spread among the revolutionary circles and also among the working masses; this was the Anarchist idea.*

Its influence, very weak at first, increased as events widened in scope. By the end of 1918 this influence had become such that the Bolsheviks, who did not allow any criticism, nor any contradiction nor opposition — were seriously disturbed. *From 1919 until the end of 1921, they had to engage in a severe struggle with the progress of this idea: a struggle at least as long and as bitter as that against reaction.*

We underline at this point a third fact which also is not sufficiently known: *Bolshevism in power combated the Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas and movements not on the grounds of ideological or concrete experience, not by means of an open and honest struggle, but with the same methods of repression that it had employed against reaction*: methods of pure violence. It began by brutally closing the centres of the libertarian organizations, by prohibiting all Anarchist activity or propaganda. It condemned the masses to not

hearing the voices of the Anarchists, and to misunderstanding their programme. And when, despite this constraint, the Anarchist idea gained ground, *the Bolsheviks passed rapidly to more violent methods, imprisonment, outlawing, killing. Then the unequal struggle between these two tendencies — one in power, the other confronted by power — increased, and became, in certain regions, an actual civil war.* In the Ukraine, notably, this state of war lasted more than two years, compelling the Bolsheviki to mobilize all their forces to stifle the Anarchist idea and to wipe out the popular movements inspired by it.

Thus the conflict between the two conceptions of the Social Revolution and, at the same time, between the Bolshevik power and certain movements of the labouring masses, held a highly important place in the events of the period embracing 1919–1921. However, all authors without exception, from the extreme right to the extreme left — we are not speaking of libertarian literature — have passed over this fact in silence. Therefore we are obliged to establish it, to supply all the details, and to draw the reader's attention to it.

Here two pertinent questions arise:

1. When, on the eve of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviki rallied an overwhelming majority of popular votes, what was the cause of the important and rapid rise of the Anarchist idea?

2. What, exactly, was the position of the Anarchists in relation to the Bolsheviks, and why were the latter impelled to fight — and fight violently — this libertarian idea and movement?

In replying to these questions it will be found easy to reveal to the reader the true visage of Bolshevism.

And by comparing the two opposing ideas in action one can understand them better, evaluate their respective worth, discover the reasons for this state of war between the two camps, and, finally, "feel the pulse" of the Revolution after the Bolshevik seizure of power in October, 1917.

Accordingly we will compare, in a rough manner, the two concepts:

The Bolshevik idea was to build, on the ruins of the bourgeois state, *a new "Workers' State" to constitute a "workers' and peasants' government," and to establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat."*

The Anarchist idea [was and] is to transform the economic and social bases of society *without having recourse to a political state*, to a government, or to a dictatorship of any sort. That is, to achieve the Revolution and resolve its

problems not by political or statist means, but by means of natural and free activity, *economic and social, of the associations of the workers themselves*, after having overtnrown the last capitalist government.

To co-ordinate action, the first conception envisaged a certain political power, organizing the life of the State with the help of the government and its agents and according to formal directives from the "centre".

The other conception conjectured the complete abandonment of political and statist organization; and the utilization of a *direct and federative* alliance and collaboration of the economic, social, technical, or other agencies (unions, co-operatives, various associations, et cetera) locally, regionally, nationally, internationally; therefore a centralization, *not political nor statist*, going from the central government to the periphery *commanded* by it, but *economic and technical*, following needs and real interests, going from the periphery to the centres, and established in a logical and natural way, according to concrete necessity, without domination or command.

It should be noted how absurd — or biased — is the reproach aimed at the Anarchists that they know only how "to destroy", and that they have no "positive" constructive ideas, especially when this charge is hurled by those of the "left". Discussions between the political parties of the extreme left and the Anarchists have always been about the positive and constructive tasks which are to be accomplished after the destruction of the bourgeois State (on which subject everybody is in agreement). What would be the way of building the new society then: statist, centralist, and political, or federalist, a-political, and simply social? Such was always the theme of the controversies between them; an irrefutable proof that the essential preoccupation of the Anarchists was always future construction.

To the thesis of the parties, a political and centralized "transitional" State, the Anarchists opposed theirs: progressive but *immediate* passage to the economic and federative community. The political parties based their arguments on the social structure left by the centuries and past regimes, and they pretended that this model was compatible with constructive ideas. The Anarchists believed that new construction required, *from the beginning, new methods, and they recommended those methods*. Whether their thesis was true or false, it proved in any case that they knew clearly what they wanted, and that they had strictly constructive ideas.

As a general rule, an erroneous interpretation — or, more often, one that was deliberately inaccurate — pretended that the libertarian conception implied the absence of all organization. Nothing is farther from the truth. It is a question, not of "organization or non-organization", but of *two different*

principles of organization.

All revolutions necessarily begin in a more or less spontaneous manner, therefore in a confused, chaotic way. It goes without saying — and the libertarians understood this as well as the others — that if a revolution remains in that primitive stage, it will fail. Immediately after the spontaneous impetus, the principle of organization has to intervene in a revolution as in all other human activity. And it is then that the grave question arises: What should be the manner and basis of this organization?

One school maintains that a central directing group — an "elite" group — ought to be formed to take in hand the whole work, lead it according to its conception, impose the latter on the whole collectivity, establish a government and organize a State, dictate its will to the populace, impose its "laws" by force and violence, combat, suppress, and even eliminate, those who are not in agreement with it.

Their opponents [the Anarchists] consider that such a conception is absurd, contrary to the fundamental principles of human evolution, and, in the last analysis, more than sterile — and harmful to the work undertaken. Naturally, the Anarchists say, it is necessary that society be organized. But this new organization should be done freely, socially, and, certainly, from the bottom. The principle of organization should arise, not from a centre created in advance to monopolize the whole and impose itself on it, but — what is exactly the opposite — from all quarters, to lead to points of co-ordination, natural centers designed to serve all these quarters.

Of course it is necessary that the organizing spirit, that men capable of carrying on organization — the "elite" — should intervene. But, in every place and under all circumstances, all those valuable humans should freely participate in the common work, *as true collaborators, and not as dictators*. It is necessary that they especially create an example, and employ themselves in grouping, co-ordinating, organizing, using good will, initiative, and knowledge, and all capacities and aptitudes without dominating, subjugating, or oppressing any one. Such individuals would be *true organizers* and theirs would constitute *a true organization*, fertile and solid, because it would be natural, human and effectively progressive. Whereas the other "organization", *imitating that of the old society of oppression and exploitation, and therefore adapted to those two goals* — would be sterile and unstable, because it would not conform to the new purposes, and therefore would not be at all progressive.

In fact, it would not contain any element of a new society, inasmuch as *it would only alter the appearance of the old*. Belonging to an outdated society, obsolete in all respects, and thus impossible as a naturally free and truly

human institution, it could only maintain itself by means of new artifices, new deceptions, new violence, new oppression and exploitation. Which inevitably would lead astray, falsify, and endanger the whole revolution. So it is obvious that such an organization will remain unproductive *as a motor for the Social Revolution*. It can no more serve as a "transitional society" (as the "Communists" pretend), for such a society must necessarily possess at least some of the seeds of that toward which it purports to evolve. And all authoritarian and statist societies possess only residues of the fallen social order.

According to the libertarian thesis, it is the labouring masses themselves who, by means of the various class organizations, factory committees, industrial and agricultural unions, co-operatives, et cetera, federated and centralized *on a basis of real needs*, should apply themselves everywhere, to solving the problems of waging the Revolution. By their powerful and fertile action, because they are free and conscious, they should co-ordinate their efforts throughout the whole country. As for the "elite", their role, according to the libertarians, is to *help* the masses, enlighten them, teach them, give them necessary advice, impel them to take the initiative, provide them with an example, and support them in their action — *but not direct them governmentally*.

The libertarians hold that a favourable solution of the problems of the Revolution can result only from the freely and consciously collective and united work of millions of men and women who bring to it and harmonize in it all the variety of their needs and interests, their strength and capacities, their gifts, aptitudes, inclinations, professional knowledge, and understanding. By the natural interplay of their economic, technical, and social organizations, with the help of the "elite" and, in case of need, under the protection of their freely organized armed forces, the labouring masses should, in view of the libertarians, be able to carry the Revolution effectively forward and progressively arrive at the practical achievement of all of its tasks.

The Bolshevik thesis was diametrically opposed to this. In the contention of the Bolsheviki it was the elite — their elite — which, forming a "workers' government" and establishing a so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat", should carry out the social transformation and solve its prodigious problems. The masses should aid this elite (the opposite of the libertarian belief that the elite should aid the masses) by faithfully, blindly, mechanically carrying out its plans, decisions, orders, and "laws". And the armed forces, also in imitation of those of the capitalist countries, likewise should blindly obey the "elite".

Such is, and remains, the essential difference between the two ideas. Such

also were the two opposed conceptions of the Social Revolution at the moment of the Russian upheaval in 1917.

The Bolsheviks, as we have said, didn't want even to listen to the Anarchists, still less to let them expound their thesis to the masses. Believing themselves in possession of an absolute, indisputable, "scientific" truth, and pretending to have to impose it immediately, they fought and eliminated the libertarian movement *by violence* from the time the Anarchist idea began to interest the masses — the usual procedure of all dominators, exploiters, and inquisitors.

In October, 1917. the two conceptions entered into conflict, which became increasingly acute, with no compromise possible. Then, for four years, this conflict kept the Bolshevik power on the alert, and played a more and more significant part in the vicissitudes of the Revolution, until the libertarian movement in Russia was completely destroyed by military force at the end of 1921.

Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, and the lessons that it teaches, it has been carefully killed by the whole political press.

Chapter 2. Causes and Consequences of the Bolshevik Conception

It was, as is well known, the political, governmental, statist, centralist conception which won in Russia in 1917.

And at this point two preliminary questions arise which need to be clarified before we deal with the events there in that year.

What were the fundamental reasons that permitted Bolshevism to triumph over Anarchism in the Russian Revolution? How is thai triumph to be evaluated?

The numerical difference between the two groups and the poor organization of the Anarchists is not enough to explain their lack of success. In the course of developments their numbers could have been increased and their organization improved. Violence alone also is not a sufficient reason. If the masses could have been won over to Anarchist ideas in time, violence could not have been used against that movement.

Moreover, as will be seen, the defeat could be imputed neither to the Anarchist idea as such nor to the attitude of the libertarians. It was the almost unavoidable consequence of a complexity of factors beyond their control.

Therefore let us seek to discover the essential causes of the repulse of the Anarchist concept. They are multiple. We will enumerate them, in the order of their importance, and try to judge their exact worth:

1. *The general state of mind of the masses*, and also of the cultivated strata of the population.

In Russia, as everywhere else, the State and the government seemed to the masses to be elements that were indispensable, natural, and historically established for all time. The people did not even ask if the State and the government represented healthy institutions.[1] Such a question did not occur to them. Or if some one formulated it they began — and often also ended — by not understanding him.

2. This statist prejudice, almost innate, resulting from evolution and environment through thousands of years, thus becoming “second nature”, was further reinforced — especially in Russia, where Anarchist literature hardly existed except for a few clandestine pamphlets and leaflets — by the press generally, including that of the Socialist parties.

We must not forget that the advanced youth in Russia read a literature which invariably presented Socialism in a statist form. The Marxists and the anti-Marxists disputed among themselves, but for both *the State remained the indisputable basis of all modern society*.

So Russia's younger generation never thought of Socialism except in a statist form. Except for a rare few individual exceptions, the Anarchist conceptions remained unknown to them until the events of 1917. Not only the Russian press, but all education in that country — all the time — had had a statist character.

3. It was for the reasons set forth above that the Socialist parties, including the Bolsheviks, had at their disposal, at the beginning of the Revolution, sizeable *cadres* of militants ready for action.

The members of the moderate Socialist parties already were relatively numerous at that time, which was one of the causes of the success of the Mensheviks and the right Social Revolutionaries. As for the Bolshevik *cadres*, they were then mainly abroad. But all these men [and women] quickly returned home and immediately set to work.

Compared with the Socialist and Bolshevik forces which were acting in Russia from the beginning of the Revolution on a wide scale and in an organized, disciplined manner, the Anarchists were only a handful of individuals without influence.

But it was not only a question of numbers. Renouncing political methods and goals, the Anarchists logically did not form an artificially disciplined political party for the purpose of conquering power. They organized themselves into groups for propaganda and social action, and later into associations and federations practicing free discipline. This mode of organization and action contributed to putting them, provisionally, in an inferior position in relation to the political parties. That, however, did not discourage them, for they were working for the day when the masses, having been made to understand — by the force of events, reinforced by explanatory and educational propaganda — the vital truth of their conception, it would be achieved.

I recall that, when I returned to Russia from abroad and arrived in Petrograd in the early part of July, 1917, I was struck by the impressive number of Bolshevik notices announcing meetings and lectures in all parts of the capital and suburbs, in public halls, in factories, and in other gathering places. I didn't see a single Anarchist notice. Also I learned that the Bolshevik Party was publishing, in Petrograd and elsewhere, a daily paper of wide circulation, and that it had important and influential nuclei

nearly everywhere — notably in the factories, in the administrations, and in the Army.

And I observed at the same time, with bitter disappointment, that there was not in the capital a single Anarchist newspaper nor any oral Anarchist propaganda. There were, it is true, a few very primitive libertarian groups there. And in Kronstadt there were a small number of Anarchists whose influence made itself felt. But these "*cadres*" were insufficient to carry on effective propaganda, not only for advocating an almost unknown idea, but also for counteracting the powerful Bolshevik activity and propaganda. *In the fifth month of a great revolution, no Anarchist newspaper, no Anarchist voice was making itself heard in the capital of the country. And this in the face of the almost unlimited activity of the Bolsheviki!* Such was my observation.

It was not until August, and with great difficulty, that a little group of Anarcho-Syndicalists, consisting mainly of comrades returned from abroad, finally succeeded in starting a weekly newspaper, *Golos Truda*, The Voice of Labour, in Petrograd. As for oral propaganda, however, there were scarcely three or four comrades in that city capable of performing it. In Moscow the situation was more favourable, for it already had a libertarian daily, published by a fairly large federation, under the title of *Anarchy*. In the provinces Anarchist forces and propaganda were insignificant.

It was astonishing that in spite of this poverty, and such an unfavourable situation, the Anarchists were able to gain, a little later — and nearly everywhere — a certain influence, forcing the Bolsheviks to combat them with arms in hand, and in some places, for a considerable time. *This rapid and spontaneous success of the Anarchist idea is highly significant*.

When, on my arrival [in Petrograd], some comrades wanted to know my first impressions, I told them this: "Our delay is irreparable. It is as if we had to overtake on foot an express train, which, in the possession of the Bolsheviki, is 100 kilometres ahead of us, and is travelling at the rate of 100 kilometres an hour. We not only have to overtake it, but we must grab hold of it at full speed, hang on, get into it and fight the Bolsheviks, dislodge them, and finally, not take over the train, but, what is much more delicate, put it at the disposal of the masses and help them make it go. A miracle is needed for all that to succeed. Our duty is to believe in that miracle and work for its realization."

I may add that such a "miracle" occurred at least twice in the course of the Revolution — first, in Kronstadt at the time of the uprising in March, 1921; and second, in the Ukraine [in the forward sweep of] the mass movement called Makhnovist. These two achievements, [are among the developments that] have been passed over in silence or distorted in the works of ignorant

or biased authors. They remain generally unknown to the public.

4. Certain events of the Revolution, cited farther on, prove to us that despite the unfavourable circumstances and the insufficient number of Anarchist *cadres*, the Anarchist idea could have blazed a trail, or even won, *if the mass of Russian workers had had at their disposal, at the very beginning of the Revolution, class organizations that were old, experienced, proven, ready to act on their own, and to put that idea into practice*. But the reality was wholly otherwise. The workers' organizations arose only in the course of the Revolution.

To be sure, they immediately made a prodigious spurt numerically. Rapidly the whole country was covered with a vast network of unions, factory committees, Soviets, et cetera. But these organizations came into being with neither preparation nor preliminary activity, without experience, without a clear ideology, without independent initiative. They had no historical tradition, no competence, no notion of their role, their task, their true mission. The libertarian idea was unknown to them. Under these conditions they were condemned to be taken in tow, from the beginning, by the political parties. And later the Bolsheviks saw to it that the weak Anarchist forces would be unable to enlighten them to the necessary degree.

The libertarian groups, as such, could only be transmitters of ideas. In order that those ideas be applied to life, "receiving" sets were needed: workers' organizations ready to get these idea-waves, "receive" them, and put them into practice. If such organizations had existed, the Anarchists of the corresponding professions would have joined them, and given them their enlightened aid, advice, and example. But in Russia, those "receiving sets" were lacking, and the organizations which arose during the Revolution could not fulfil this purpose [with the needed swiftness]. The Anarchist ideas, although they were broadcast energetically by a few "transmitters", were "lost in the air" without being received effectively. So they had no practical results.

Under these conditions, in order that the Anarchist idea might blaze a trail and win, it would have been necessary either that Bolshevism didn't exist, or that the Bolsheviks acted as Anarchists — or that the Revolution had left sufficient time to the libertarians and the working masses to permit the workers' organizations to receive that idea and become capable of achieving it before being swallowed up and subjugated by the Bolshevik State. This latter possibility did not occur, the Bolsheviki having swallowed the workers' organizations, and blocked the way for the Anarchists, before the former could familiarize themselves with Anarchist concepts, oppose this seizure, and orient the Revolution in a libertarian direction.

The absence of these “receiving sets”, that is, of workers’ organizations, socially ready to receive and carry out, from the start, the Anarchist idea, (and then, the lack of time needed to create such “receiving sets”) — this absence, in my opinion, was one of the principal reasons for the failure of Anarchism in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

5. Another factor which we will glance at, and the importance of which is not inconsiderable, despite its subjective character, could be added to the preceding one. *It aggravated it and rendered it completely fatal to the Revolution.*

There was a simple and speedy method available to eliminate the effects of the backwardness of the masses, to make up for lost time, to fill in the gaps. That was to leave the field free for the libertarian propaganda and movement, since, after the fall of the last Kerensky government, freedom of speech, organization, and action were definitely achieved by the Revolution.

Knowing of the absence of workers’ organizations, and of a widespread libertarian propaganda and Anarchist knowledge before the Revolution, enables us to understand why the masses entrusted their fate to a political party and a power, thus repeating the fundamental error of previous revolutions. Under the existing conditions, *the beginning* was *objectively* inevitable. But subsequent developments were not in the least inevitable.

Let me explain.

A *true* revolution can only take its flight, evolve, attain its objectives, if it has an environment of the free circulation of revolutionary ideas concerning the course to follow, and the problems to be solved. This liberty is as indispensable to the Revolution as air is to respiration.[2] That is why, among other things, the dictatorship of a party, a dictatorship which leads inevitably to the suppression of *all* freedom of speech, press, organization, and action — even for the revolutionary tendencies, except for the party in power — is *fatal* to true revolution.

In social matters, no one can pretend to possess the whole truth, or to be immune from self-deception. Those who do so pretend — whether they call themselves Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, or anything else — and who, once in power, destroy, on the strength of this pretension, other ideas, inevitably establish a kind of *social inquisition*. And like all inquisitions, they stifle all truth, all justice, all progress, life, man, the very breath of the Revolution. Only the free exchange of revolutionary ideas, the multiform collective thought, with its law of natural selection, can keep us from error and prevent us from going astray. Those who do not

recognize this are simply *bad individualists* while pretending to be Socialists, collectivists, Communists, et cetera.

These truths are so clear and natural in our days — I might even say *evident* — that one is really uncomfortable in having to insist on them. It is necessary to be both blind and deaf, or of bad faith, to fail to understand them. Yet Lenin, and others with him, undoubtedly sincere, renounced them. The fallibility of the human mind. And as for those who blindly followed the "chiefs", they recognized their error too late. By that time the Inquisition was functioning at full steam; it had its "apparatus" and its coercive forces. And the masses "obeyed" as they were accustomed to, or were, once more, powerless to alter the situation. The Revolution was corrupted, turned from its course, and the correct way was lost. "Everything disgusts me so much," Lenin admitted to his comrades one day, seeing what was going on around him, "that, despite my illness, I would like to leave it all and flee." Had he understood?

If, once in power, the Bolshevik Party had, we won't say encouraged (that would have been too much to ask), but *only allowed freedom of speech and organization to the libertarians, the retardation would have been quickly made up for and the gaps filled in.* As will be seen, the facts prove this irrefutably. The long and difficult struggle which the Bolsheviks had to carry on against Anarchism, despite its weakness, alone permits one to conjecture the success that the Anarchists might have achieved if they had had freedom of speech and action.

But, precisely because of the initial successes of the libertarian movement, and because free Anarchist activity infallibly would have given rise to the idea that all political parties and all power were useless, which would have led to the Bolshevik Party"s elimination, the latter could not permit this liberty. To tolerate Anarchist propaganda would have been equivalent to suicide for the Bolsheviki. *They did their best to prevent, then to forbid, and finally to suppress by brute force, any manifestation of libertarian concepts.*

It is frequently contended that the labouring masses are incapable of achieving a revolution for themselves, freely. This thesis is particularly dear to the "Communists", for it permits them to invoke an "objective" situation necessarily leading to repression of the "wicked Utopian Anarchists". (Since the masses are incompetent, they say, an "Anarchist revolution" would mean the death of the Revolution). But this thesis is absolutely gratuitous. Let them furnish *proof* of such alleged incapacity of the masses. One can search history without finding a single example *where the masses were really left to act freely* (while being helped, naturally), which would be the only way of *proving* their incapacity.

This experiment never has been tried — and for reasons easy to understand. (It would, however, be simple). For it is well known that that thesis is false, and the experiment would put an end to exploitation of the people and to authority, based, no matter what its form, not on the incapacity of the masses, but only on violation and deception. That is why, moreover, that eventually the labouring masses will be driven historically to *take* their liberty of action through a revolution, *a true one* — for the dominators (they are always at the same time exploiters, or are in the service of an exploiting class) will never *give* it, no matter what their label.

The fact that they [the mass of workers] have always entrusted their fate, until the present, to parties, to governments, to leaders — a fact that all the dominators and potential exploiters use to advantage for *subjugating* the masses — may be explained by several circumstances which we don't have to analyze here, and which have nothing to do with the capacity or incapacity of the multitude. This fact proves, if one wishes, the credulity, the heedlessness, of the masses, their unawareness of their own strength, but not at all their incapacity, that is, the absence of that strength.

"Incapacity of the masses". What a tool for all exploiters and dominators, past, present, and future, and especially for the modern aspiring enslavers, whatever their insignia — Nazism, Bolshevism, Fascism, or Communism. "Incapacity of the masses" There is a point on which the reactionaries of all colours are in perfect agreement with the "Communists". And this agreement is exceedingly significant.

Let the "capable" and infallible leaders of our time, permit the labouring masses, on the day after the coming Revolution, to act freely, while simply helping them where there is need. They will soon see whether the masses are "incapable" of acting without political protectors. We can assure them that the Revolution will then lead to another result than that of 1917, with its Fascism and unending war.

Alas, we know in advance that they never will dare such an experiment. And the masses again have a special task to perform : that of eliminating in full consciousness and in an opportune time, all the "aspirants", of taking the work into their own hands, and carrying it out in full independence. Let us hope that this time the task will be done.

Accordingly the reader will understand why the propaganda of Anarchist ideas, trying to destroy the credulity of the masses, make them conscious of their own strength, and give them confidence in themselves, was considered, at all times and in all countries, as the most dangerous. It has been repressed, and its protagonists pursued, with exceptional promptness and severity, by all reactionary governments.

In Russia this savage repression rendered the spread of libertarian concepts — already so difficult under existing circumstances — almost impossible up to the advent of the Revolution. Then the Anarchists were allowed a certain degree of freedom of action. But we have seen that under the provisional governments from February to October, 1917, the Anarchist movement still could not accomplish much. And as for the Bolsheviks, they were no exceptions to the rule. As soon as they achieved power, they undertook the suppression of libertarians by every means at their disposal: slanders, traps and ambushes, prohibitions, searches, arrests, acts of violence, destruction of meeting places, assassinations — anything was acceptable to them. And when they felt that their power was sufficiently consolidated, they launched *a general and decisive* repression against the Anarchists. This began in April, 1918, and has never let up until the present. Farther on the reader will find details of this “feat of valour” by the Bolsheviki, almost unknown outside of Russia.

Thus Anarchist activity could only be carried on in approximate freedom for some six months. It is hardly astonishing that the libertarian movement did not have time to organize, to expand, to get rid of, in growing, its weakness and faults. All the more reason that it lacked time to reach the masses and make itself known to them. It remained to the end, shut up in a “closed vessel”. It was killed in the egg, without being able to break the shell. (This was, objectively, not impossible).

Such was the second principal reason for its failure.

It is necessary to underline here the *capital importance* — for the Revolution — of what we have just stated.

The Bolsheviks wiped out Anarchism *deliberately, aggressively*. Taking advantage of the circumstances, and of their hold upon the masses, they savagely suppressed the libertarian idea and the movements which supported it. They did not let Anarchism exist, still less go to the masses. Later they had the impudence to maintain, for political reasons, that Anarchism had failed “ideologically”, the masses having understood and rejected its “anti-proletarian doctrine”. Abroad, all those who like to be fooled took them at their word. The “Communists” also pretend, as we have said, that since Anarchism, in opposing Bolshevism, did not have “objectively” any chance of steering the Revolution onto its course, it put it in danger and showed itself as being objectively “counter-revolutionary”, and therefore had to be fought without softness. They took care not to say that it was precisely they who, very “subjectively”, took away from the Anarchists — and from the masses — the last chance, the very real means, and the concrete possibility of success.

In wiping out the libertarian movement, *in destroying the free movements of the masses*, the Bolsheviki, *ipso facto*, stopped and stifled the Revolution.

Unable to advance further towards the real emancipation of the masses, for which had been substituted a dominating statism, inevitably bureaucratic and exploitive, and "neo-capitalist", the *real* Revolution inevitably had to recede. For *all unfulfilled revolutions*, that is to say, those which do not lead to genuine and complete emancipation of labour, *are condemned to recede*, in one way or another. History teaches us this. And the Russian Revolution confirms it. But those who don't want to listen or see, are slow to understand it.

Some persist in believing in an authoritarian revolution, while others end by despairing of all revolutions, instead of seeking for the *why* of the failure. Still others — and these, alas, are the most numerous — don't want to listen or look. They imagine that they will be able to "live their lives" away from and sheltered from the far-sweeping social backwaters. They are indifferent to the social whole, and seek to intrench themselves in their own miserable individual existence, unconscious of the enormous obstacle that they present, by their attitude, to human progress and their own *real* well-being. They believe anything and follow anything provided they are "left in peace". They hope thus to be able to "save themselves" in the midst of the cataclysm. A fundamental and fatal error and illusion. However, the truth is simple: so long as the labour of man is not free of all exploitation by man, *no one* can speak of real life, real progress, or real personal well-being.

For thousands of years three principal conditions have prevented the existence of free labour, and therefore "fraternity" and human well-being:

1. The state of technology — man did not possess the vast forces of Nature of which he is now master.

2. The state of economic affairs which resulted from this — the insufficiency of the products of human labour, and, as a consequence, an "exchange economy", money, profit; in short, the capitalist system of production and distribution, based on the scarcity of manufactured products.[3]

3. The *moral* factor, which, in its turn, followed the first two — ignorance, brutalization, submission, resignation of the masses.

But for several decades the first two conditions cited have been greatly modified. Technologically and economically, free labour is now not only possible, but indispensable for the normal life and evolution of man. The

capitalist and authoritarian system can no longer insure either one or the other; it can only produce wars. Only the morale is inadequate: accustomed for millennia to resignation and submission, the immense majority of men will not see the true path which is open before them; they still do not perceive the action which history imposes on them. As before, they "follow" and "submit", lending their enormous energy to acts of war and senseless destruction, instead of realizing that, under modern conditions, their free creative activity would be crowned with success. It will be necessary that *the force of events*, wars, calamities of all sorts, abortive and repeated revolutions, occurring without interruption, taking from them all possibility of living, finally will open their eyes to the truth and will consecrate their energy to real human action, free, constructive, and benevolent.

We must add, in passing, that in our time, the Revolution and reaction will, in the consequences, inevitably be world-wide. Moreover, in 1789 the French Revolution and the reaction which I followed it made resounding echoes and motivated important movements in several countries. If the Russian Revolution, continuing to march forward, had become the great emancipating revolution, peoples in other lands would have followed it presently and in the same direction. In that event it would have been, in fact and not just on paper, a powerful beacon lighting up the true path for humanity.

On the contrary, distorted, and stopped in full retreat, it j served admirably the purposes of world reaction, which was awaiting its hour. (The great moguls of reaction are more perspicacious than the revolutionists). The illusion, the myth, the slogans, the trimmings, and the waste paper remained, but *real* life, which has no use for illusions, trimmings, and waste paper, pursued a wholly different route. Hence the reaction and its far-reaching consequences: Fascism, new wars, and economic and social catastrophes, became almost inevitable.

In this situation, the fundamental — and well-known — error of Lenin is curious and suggestive. He expected a rapid extension of the "Communist" revolution to other countries. But his hopes were in vain. However, fundamentally, he did not deceive himself: the true Revolution will "set fire to the world". Yes, a *true* revolution would have set the world afire. Only his revolution was not a *true* one. And that Lenin did not see. It was in this respect that he deceived himself. Blinded by his statist doctrine, fascinated by "victory", he did not and could not realize that it was a miscarried, strayed revolution; that it was going to remain sterile; that it could "set fire" to nothing, for it had ceased to "burn" itself; that it had lost the power of spreading, a characteristic of great causes, because it had ceased to be a great cause.

Could he see, in his blindness, that this revolution was going to stop, retreat, degenerate, give rise to victorious reaction in other countries after a few abortive uprisings? Of course not. And he committed a second error: He believed that the ultimate fate of the Russian Revolution depended upon its extension to other countries. Exactly the opposite was true: extension of the Revolution depended upon the results of the revolution in Russia.

These results being vague and uncertain, the labouring masses abroad hesitated, inquired, waited for details. But the information and other indicative elements became more and more obscure and contradictory. The inquiries and delegations met with no definite data. Meanwhile the negative testimonials [about what was happening among the Russians] accumulated. The European masses temporized, did not dare, were mistrustful or uninterested. The necessary spirit was lacking in them, and the cause remained in doubt. Then came the disagreements and the schisms. All this played into the hands of the reaction. It prepared, organized, acted.

Lenin's successors had to accept the evidence. Without perhaps discerning the true cause, they understood intuitively that conditions were not propitious for an *extension* of the "Communist" Revolution, but that there was a vast reaction against it. They understood that this *reaction* would be dangerous for them, for their Revolution, such as it was, could not be imposed upon the world. So they set feverishly to work preparing for future wars, henceforth inevitable. From now, this was the only course for them to follow. And for history, too!

It is curious to observe that, subsequently, the "Communists" tried to explain the lack of success and mistakes of the Revolution by invoking "the capitalist encirclement", the inaction of the proletariat of other countries, and the strength of world reaction. They did not suspect — or did not admit — that the weakness of the foreign workers and the spreading of the reaction were, to a large extent, the natural consequences of the false route on which they themselves had put the Revolution; and that, in diverting it, they *themselves* had prepared the road for reaction, for Fascism, and for war.

Such is the tragic truth of the Bolshevik Revolution. Such is its principal lesson for the workers of the world. Fundamentally, it is simple, clear, and indisputable. However, it is still neither established nor even known. It will become so in proportion to events, and as the free study of the Russian Revolution develops.

Let us not be deceived about the fate of the coming Revolution! It has before it only two courses: either that of the genuine Social Revolution which will lead to *the real emancipation of the workers* (and which is objectively possible), or, again, that of the political, statist, and authoritarian impasse, leading inevitably to a new reaction, new wars, and catastrophes of all sorts.

Human evolution does not stop. It blazes a trail through, over, or around any obstacles. In our day, capitalist, authoritarian, and political society completely *forbids it in advance*. That society must therefore disappear now, in one way or another. If again this time the people do not know how *really to transform it* and *at the moment of the Revolution*, the unavoidable consequence will be a new reaction, a new war, and terrible economic and social cataclysms; in short, the continuation of total destruction, *until the people understand and act accordingly*. For, in this case, human evolution will have no other way of blazing a trail.[4]

We mention finally an element which, without having the importance of the factors already cited, nevertheless played a notable role in the tragedy of the Russian Revolution. It has to do with "publicity" or demagogy. Like all political parties, the Bolshevik Party [now the "Communist" Party] used and abused such means. To impress the masses, to "conquer" them, it made use of display, publicity, and bluff. Moreover, it put itself, in any way it could, on top of a mountain so that the crowd could see it, hear it, and admire it. All this gave it strength for the moment.

But such methods are foreign to the libertarian movement, which, by reason of its very essence, is more anonymous, discreet, modest, quiet. This fact increased its temporary weakness. Refusing to *lead* the masses, working to awaken their consciousness, and depending on their free and direct action, it was obliged to renounce demagogy and work in the shadows, preparing for the future, without seeking to impose authority.

Such was its situation in Russia.

Here I would like to leave the field of concrete facts for a few minutes, and to attempt a short incursion into "philosophical" territory.

The basic idea of Anarchism is simple: no party, political or ideological group, placed above or outside the labouring masses to "govern" or "guide" them ever succeeds in emancipating them, even if it sincerely desires to do so. Effective emancipation can be achieved only by the *direct, widespread, and independent action of those concerned, of the workers themselves*, grouped, not under the banner of a political party or of an ideological formation, but in their own class organizations (productive workers' unions, factory

committees, co-operatives, et cetera) on the basis of concrete action and self-government, *helped, but not governed,* by revolutionaries working in the very midst of, and not above the mass and the professional, technical, defence, and other branches.

All political or ideological grouping which seeks to "guide" the masses toward their emancipation by the political or governmental route, are taking a false trail, leading to failure and ending inevitably by installing a new system of economic and social privileges, thus giving rise, under another aspect, to a regime of oppression and exploitation for the workers — therefore another variety of capitalism — instead of helping the Revolution to direct them to their emancipation.

This thesis necessarily leads to another: The Anarchist idea and the true emancipating revolution cannot be achieved by *the Anarchists as such*, but only by the vast masses concerned — the Anarchists, or rather, the revolutionaries in general, being called in only to enlighten and aid them under certain circumstances. If the Anarchists pretended to be able to achieve the Social Revolution by "guiding" the masses, such a pretension would be an illusion, as was that of the Bolsheviki, and for the same reason.

That is not all. In view of the immensity — one might say the universality — and the nature of the task, the working class alone cannot lead the true Revolution to a satisfactory conclusion. If it has the pretentiousness of acting alone and imposing itself upon the other elements of the population by dictatorship, and forcibly making them follow it, it will meet with the same failure. One must understand nothing about social phenomena nor of the nature of men and things to believe the contrary.

Also, at the beginning of such a struggle for effective emancipation, history necessarily takes an entirely different course.

Three conditions are indispensable — in the following order of importance — for a revolution to succeed conclusively.

1. It is necessary that great masses — millions of persons in several countries — driven by imperative necessity, participate in it of their own free will.

2. That, by reason of this fact, the more advanced elements, the revolutionists, part of the working class, et al., do not have recourse to coercive measures of a political nature.

3. That for these two reasons, the huge "neutral" mass, carried without

> compulsion by the far-sweeping current, by the free enthusiasm of millions of humans, and by the first positive results of this gigantic movement, accept of their own free will the *fait accompli* and come over more and more to the side of the true revolution.

Thus the achievement of the true emancipating revolution requires the active participation, the strict collaboration, conscious and without reservations, of millions of men of all social conditions, declassed, unemployed, levelled, and thrown into the Revolution by the force of events.

But, in order that these millions of men be driven into a place from which there is no escape, it is necessary above everything else that this force dislodge them from the beaten track of their daily existence. And for this to happen, it is necessary that this existence, the existing society itself, become impossible; *that it be ruined from top to bottom — its economy, its social regime, its politics, its manners, customs, and prejudices.*

Such is the course history takes when the times are ripe for the *true* revolution, for true emancipation.

It is here that we touch upon the heart of the problem.

I think that in Russia this destruction had not gone far enough. Thus the political idea had not been destroyed, which permitted the Bolsheviks to take power, impose their dictatorship, and consolidate themselves. Other false principles and prejudices likewise remained.

The destruction which had preceded the revolution of 1917 was sufficient to stop the war and modify the forms of power and capitalism. But it was not sizeable enough to destroy them *in their very essence*, to impel millions of men to abandon the false modern social principles (State, politics, power, government, et cetera) and act themselves on completely new bases, and have done forever with capitalism and power, *in all their previous forms*.

This insufficiency of destruction was, in my opinion, the fundamental cause which arrested the Russian Revolution and led to its deformation by the Bolsheviki. [5]

It is here that the “philosophical” question arises.

The following reasoning appears quite plausible:

“If, truly, the insufficiency of the preliminary destruction prevented the masses from achieving their revolution, this element, in fact, over-rides and sweeps away everything, and explains everything. In this case, were not

the Bolsheviks right in taking power and pushing the Revolution as far as possible, thus barring the way to reaction? Was not their action historically justified, with its methods and consequences?"

To that I reply:

In the first place, it is necessary to define the problem. Fundamentally, were the labouring masses capable of continuing the Revolution and building the new society themselves, by means of their class organizations, which were created by the Revolution, and with the help of the revolutionists?

The real problem is there.

If the answer is *no*, then one can understand why someone might try to justify the Bolsheviki,[6] without, however, being able to pretend that their revolution was the *true* revolution, or that their procedure was justified where the masses were capable of acting by themselves. But if the answer is yes, then they are irrevocably condemned "without extenuating circumstances", whatever the circumstances and the momentary mistakes of the masses may have been.

In speaking of the insufficiency of destruction, we meant by that especially the evil survival of the political idea. This not having been nullified in advance, the masses, victorious in February, 1917, entrusted the fate of the Revolution subsequently to a party, that is to say, to new masters, instead of getting rid of all pretenders, whatever their label, and taking the Revolution entirely into their own hands. Thus they repeated the fundamental error of previous revolutions. But this erroneous act had nothing to do with the *capacity or incapacity of the masses.*

Let us suppose for the moment that there had been no one to profit from that error. Would the masses have been capable of carrying the Revolution to its final goal — to effective, complete emancipation? To this question I reply categorically: *Yes*. I even maintain that the labouring masses were *the only ones capable* of leading it there. I hope that the reader will find irrefutable proof of that in this work. And, if this affirmation is correct, then *the political factor was not in the least necessary for preventing reaction, continuing the Revolution*, and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

2. Let us point out now that our thesis is confirmed by a significant fact, details of which will be given later. In the course of the Revolution, many Russians *recognized their error*. (The political principle began to fade). They wanted to correct it, to act themselves, to get rid of the pretentious and ineffectual guardianship of the party in power. Here and there they even

set to work. But instead of being pleased with this, of encouraging them, or of helping them along that course, as true revolutionists would have done, the Bolsheviki opposed that tendency by unprecedented deceit, violence, and a profusion of military and terrorist exploits. *Having discovered their error, the revolutionary masses wished to act themselves and felt that they were capable oj doing so. The Bolsheviks broke their spirit by force.*

3. It follows, irrefutably, that the Bolsheviki did not "push the Revolution as far as possible". Retaining power, with all its forces and advantages, they, on the contrary, *kept it down*. And, subsequently, having taken over the capitalist property, they succeeded, after a fierce struggle against popular total revolution, in turning it to their own advantage, restoring under another form the capitalist exploitation of the masses. (Wherever men do not work under conditions of freedom, the system is necessarily capitalistic, though the form may vary).

4. Thus it is clear that it was not at all a question of justification, but only an historical explanation of the triumph of Bolshevism over the libertarian conception in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

5. It follows also that the real "historical meaning" of Bolshevism is purely negative. It is another lesson from experience, demonstrating to the labouring masses *how not to wage a revolution* — a lesson which completely condemns the political idea. Under the conditions existing [in Russia in 1917] such a lesson was almost inevitable, *but not at all indispensable*. Acting in another manner (which, theoretically, would not have been impossible), the Bolsheviks could have avoided it. So they have no right to be proud of themselves, nor to pose as saviours.

6. This lesson also emphasizes other important points:

a. The historical evolution of humanity has reached a stage where continuity of progress requires *free* labour, exempt from all submission, from all constraint, from all exploitation of man by man. Economically, technically, socially, and even morally, *such labour is, from now on, not only possible but historically indispensable*. The "lever" of this vast social transformation (of which, through several decades, we have been experiencing the tragic convulsions) is the Revolution. To be truly progressive and "justified" that revolution must necessarily lead to a system in which human labour will be effectively and totally emancipated.

b. In order that the labouring masses may pass from slave labour to free labour, they must, from the beginning of the Revolution, carry it out themselves, in full freedom, in complete independence. Only

> on this condition can they, concretely and immediately, take in hand the task which is now imposed upon them by history — the building of a society based on emancipated labour.

All modern revolutions which are not carried out by the masses themselves will not lead to the historically indicated result. So they will be neither progressive nor "justified" but perverted, turned from their true course, and finally lost. Led by new masters and guardians, again kept from all initiative and from all essentially free responsible activity, and compelled as in the past to follow docilely this '"chief" or that "guide" who has imposed himself on them, the labouring masses will revert to their time-honoured habit of "following" and will remain an "amorphous herd", submissive and shorn. And the *true* revolution simply will not be accomplished.

7. Of course it might still be said to me:

"Suppose for the moment that you are right on certain points. It is none the less true that, though the preliminary destruction was, in your opinion, insufficient, *the total Revolution*, in the libertarian sense of the term, *was objectively impossible*. Consequently what happened was, historically at least, *inevitable*, and the libertarian idea could only have been a utopian dream. Its utopianism might have put the whole Revolution in danger. The Bolsheviks knew this and acted accordingly. That is their justification."

The reader may have noticed that I invariably say: "almost inevitable". I use "almost" deliberately. From my pen this word takes on a special importance.

Naturally, in principle, the general objective factors outweigh all others. In the phase we are considering, the insufficiency of the preliminary destruction — and the survival of the political principle — would, objectively, lead to the accession of Bolshevism. But in the human world the problem of "factors" becomes exceedingly delicate. The objective factors dominate it, not in an absolute manner, but only to a certain degree, and the subjective factors play an important role.

What exactly is this role, and to what extent is it significant? VVe do not know. The rudimentary state of the sciences of man do not permit us to define [the two roles] precisely. And the task is all the more arduous in that neither of the two is fixed, but that both are, on the contrary, infinitely mobile and variable. (This problem is one of free will). How and to what extent does "determinism" prevail over the "free will" of man? Inversely: in what sense and to what degree does "free will" exist and how does it extricate itself from the hold of "determinism"? In spite of the

researches of many thinkers we still do not know.

What we do know perfectly is that subjective factors hold an important place in human affairs — to such an extent that sometimes they overcome the apparently "inevitable" effects of the objective factors, especially when the former are connected in a certain way.

Let us cite a modern example, striking and universally known.

In the war of 1914–18, Germany, objectively, should have defeated France. And, in fact, scarcely a month after the beginning of hostilities, the German Army was under the walls of Paris. One after another, the battles were lost by the French. France was "almost inevitably" going to be conquered. (If it had been, it would have been easy to say later, with a "scientific" manner, that this was "historically and objectively indispensable"). Then there occurred a series of purely subjective developments. They linked together and destroyed the effects of the objective factors.

Too confident of the crushing superiority of his forces and carried away by the enthusiasm of his victorious troops, General von Kluck, who commanded the Kaiser's Army, neglected to cover his right wing adequately — this was the first purely subjective factor. (Another general, or even von Kluck at another time, might have covered that wing).

General Gallieni, military commander of Paris, observed this error of von Kluck, and proposed to Generalissimo Joffre that the uncovered wing be attacked with all the forces available, notably those of the Paris garrison. This was the second subjective circumstance — for it required the discernment and the will of Gallieni to make such a resolution and risk such a responsibility. Another general — or even Gallieni at another moment — might have been neither so discerning nor so determined.

Joffre accepted Gallidni's plan and ordered the attack. This was the third subjective fact — for it needed the good will and other moral qualities of Joffre to accept that proposal. Another generalissimo, haughty and jealous of his prerogatives, might have replied to Gallieni: "You are the commander in Paris. So tend to your own affairs and don't meddle in what is not within your province."

Finally, the strange fact that the discussions between Gallium" and Joffre were not intercepted by the German high command, usually well informed about what occurred on the French side, must also be added to this chain of subjective factors, a chain which led to the French victory and which was decisive for the issues of the war.

Themselves aware of the objective improbability of this victory, the French characterized it as “the miracle of the Marne”. But it was not a miracle. It was simply a rather unusual event, unexpected and “imponderable”, growing out of a group of subjective factors which overcame the objective elements.

It was in the same sense that I said to my comrades in Russia in 1917: “A ‘miracle’ is needed for the libertarian idea to overcome Bolshevism in this revolution. We must believe in this miracle and work for its realization.”

By that I meant that only an unforeseen and imponderable play of subjective factors could militate against the crushing objective weight of Bolshevism. This did not occur. But what is important is that *it could have occurred*. And let us recall that *it almost occurred twice* — once at the time of the Kronstadt uprising in March, 1921, and in the course of the severe fighting between the new authorities and the Anarchist masses in the Ukraine in 1919–1921.

Thus in the human world “absolute objective inevitability” does not exist. At any moment purely human, subjective factors can intervene and override [any such abstraction].

The Anarchist conception, as solidly and “scientifically” established as that of the Bolsheviks, (the latter conception also was treated as Utopian by its opponents, on the eve of the Revolution) exists. Its fate, in the course of the next revolution, depends on a highly complicated interplay of all sorts of factors, objective and subjective, the latter especially being infinitely varied, mobile, changeable, unforeseeable, and intangible — a play, the result of which can never be “objectively inevitable”.

Concluding on this point, I repeat that the insufficiency of destruction was the fundamental cause of the triumph of Bolshevism over Anarchism in the 1917 Russian Revolution. It goes without saying that this was the case, and that it is being discussed here because *the play of various other factors did not efface either the cause or the effect.* But it could have been otherwise. And who knows what subjective factors played a part in the triumph of Bolshevism?

To be sure, the discrediting *in advance* of the evil political chimera of authoritarian “Communism” would have assured, facilitated, and accelerated the realization of the libertarian principle. But in a general way, *the insufficiency of this discrediting at the beginning of the Revolution did not at all signify the inevitable eclipse of Anarchism.*

The complex play of various factors may have unexpected results. It may

end by suppressing cause and effect. *The political and authoritarian idea, the statist conception, might have been destroyed in the course of the Revolution, and this would have left the field free for the achievement of the Anarchist concept.*

Like all revolutions, that of 1917 had two roads before it:

1. That of *the true Revolution of the masses*, leading directly to their complete emancipation. If this road had been taken, the prodigious enthusiasm and the *definitive* result of such a revolution would have effectively "shaken the world". Probably all reaction would have been impossible from then on; and all dissension among the social movements would have been prevented in advance by the force of the fait accompli. Finally, the ferment which followed the Russian Revolution in Europe probably would have led to the same definitive result.

2. That of the *unachieved* Revolution. In that case, history would have had only one way of continuing: retreat to world-wide reaction, world-wide catastrophe (war), total destruction of the existing society, and, in the last analysis, resumption of the Revolution by the masses themselves, actually achieving their emancipation.

In principle, the two roads were possible. But the totality of factors present rendered the second road much more probable. It was the second, in fact, that was followed by the 1917 Revolution.

But the first is the one that should be taken by the next revolution.

And now, our philosophical parenthesis concluded, let us return to the events [involved in all this].

[1] To avoid confusion, I will give some definitions here:
I use the term *State* in its *current* and *concrete* meaning: a meaning that it has acquired at the end of a long historical evolution, a meaning which is perfectly and uniformly accepted by everyone: a meaning finally, which precisely constitutes the object of the whole controversy.
Herein *the State* signifies a congealed political organism, "mechanically" centralized or directed by a political government supported by a complexity of laws and coercive institutions.
Certain bourgeois. Socialist, and Communist authors and critics use the term State in another sense, vast and general, declaring that all organized society on a large scale represents a State. And they deduce from this that any new society, whatever it is, will "necessarily" be a State. According to them, we are fruitlessly discussing a *word*.

According to us, *they* are playing with words. For a concrete concept, generally accepted and historically given, they substitute another, and they combat, in the name of the latter, anti-statist, libertarian, Anarchist ideas. Moreover, they thus confuse, unconsciously or deliberately, two essentially different concepts: *State* and *Society*.

It goes without saying that the future society — the real one — will be society. It is not a question of the word, but of the essence. (It is probable that they [those authors and critics] will abandon a term which designates a determined and limited form of society. In any case, if the future good society is called a "State" it will thus give that term an entirety different meaning from that which is the subject of the controversy.) What is important — and what the Anarchists maintain — is that this future society will be incompatible with what is called a State at present.

I take advantage of this occasion to remark that many authors are wrong in admitting only two definitions of the term accepted up to now: Either the State (which they confuse with Society) or a free disorganized assembly and a chaotic struggle between individuals and groups of individuals. Consciously or unconsciously, they omit a third possibility which is neither a State (in the concrete meaning indicated) nor a random gathering of individuals, *but a society based on the free and natural union of all sorts of associations and federations: consumers and producers*.

There exists, therefore, not one but two essentially different anti-statisms. One, unreasonable, and consequently easily attacked, is allegedly based on the "*free caprice of individuals*. " (Who has advocated such an absurdity? Is it not a pure invention, created for the sake of argument?) The other is a-political, but is reasonably based on something perfectly organized, on the co-operative union of various associations. It is in the name of the latter form of *anti-statism* that Anarchism combats the State.

An analogous observation also should be made about the term *government*. There are many who declare: "It will never be possible to dispense with men who organize, administer, direct, et cetera." Those who do these things for a vast social complex — for a "State" — form a "government" whether you like it or not. And they still pretend that it is only a discussion of words! They fall here into the same error. The political and coercive government of a *political State* is one thing; a body of administrators, organizers and, animators, or of technical, professional, or other directors, indispensable for the co-ordinated functioning of the associations, federations, et cetera, is another.

So let us not play with words. Let us be precise and clear. Does one accept, yes or no, that a political State, directed by a representative, political, or other government, can serve a function in a true future society? If yes, one is not an Anarchist. If no, one is already one, for the most part. Does one agree, yes or no, that a political State, et cetera, can serve a transitional society on the way to true Socialism? If yes, one is not an Anarchist. If no,

one is.

[2] Some individuals pretend that *freedom* of ideas is a danger to the Revolution. But from the moment that the armed forces are *with the revolutionary people* (otherwise the Revolution could not take place) and the people themselves control them, what danger could an opinion have? And then, if the workers *themselves* are guarding the Revolution, they will know how to defend themselves against any *real* danger better than an "extinguisher".

[3] Readers who wish to investigate the problem of modern economic evolution should consult especially the works of Jacques Duboin.

[4] See, in this connection, the author's *Choses Vecues*, a first brief study of the Russian Revolution, in *La Revue Anarchiste* of Sebastian Faure, [Paris?] 1922–24.

[5] All these ideas are developed more fully in my study mentioned earlier: *Choses Vecues*

[6] As the reader will see, I do not mean that in this case the Bolsheviks were justified. Those who would maintain that they were must prove that they did not have any other way of acting in order to prepare the masses, progressively, to achieve a free and total revolution. I am emphatically of the opinion that they could have found other methods. But I am not much concerned with that aspect of the question. Considering the thesis of the incapacity of the masses as being absolutely false, and considering that the facts set forth in this work prove it abundantly, I have no reason to envisage a situation which, to me, simply did not exist.

Part II. About the October Revolution

Chapter 1. Bolsheviks and Anarchists Before October

Here we find occasion to go back and review the respective positions of the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists prior to the October Revolution.

The position of the Bolsheviki on the eve of that revolution was characteristic.

It is well to recall, however, that Lenin's ideology and the position of his party had changed considerably since 1900. Aware that the Russian labouring masses, once started in revolt, would go far and would not stop at a bourgeois solution — especially in a country where the bourgeoisie hardly existed as a class — Lenin and his party, in their desire to anticipate and dominate the masses in order to lead them, ended by formulating an extremely advanced revolutionary programme. They now envisaged a strictly Socialist revolution. And they arrived at an almost libertarian conception of the revolution, with almost Anarchist slogans — except, of course, with regard to the fundamental point of demarcation — the taking of power and the problem of the State.

When I read the writings of Lenin, especially those after 1914, I observed a perfect parallelism between his ideas and those of the Anarchists, except for the idea of the State and power. This identity of understanding, recognition, and prediction seemed to me already very dangerous for the *true* cause of the Revolution. For — I did not fool myself — under the pen, in the mouths, and in the acts, of the Bolsheviks, all these great ideas were without real life, without a future. These writings and these words, fascinating and overpowering, would remain without serious consequences, because the subsequent acts [of the Bolsheviki] certainly were not going to correspond to their theories.

But I was sure that, on the one hand, the masses, in view of the weakness of the Anarchist movement, would blindly follow the Bolsheviks, and that, on the other hand, the latter inevitably would deceive the masses and mislead them into an evil course. For beyond any doubt they would distort and pervert their proclaimed principles.

That is what happened in fact.

In order to quicken the spirit of the masses, and gain their sympathy and confidence, the Bolshevik Party launched, with all the strength of its agitational and propaganda apparatus, slogans which until then had

particularly and insistently been voiced by the Anarchists:

> *Long live the Social Revolution!*
> *Down with the war! Immediate peace!*

And especially:

> *The land to the peasants!*
> *The factories to the workers!*

The labouring masses swiftly seized upon these slogans, which expressed their real aspirations perfectly.

From the lips and under the pens of the Anarchists, those slogans were sincere and concrete, for they corresponded to their principles and called for action entirely in conformity with such principles. But with the Bolsheviks, the same slogans meant practical solutions totally different from those of the libertarians, and did not at all tally with the ideas which the words appeared to express. For the Bolsheviki, they were *only* slogans.

Social Revolution meant for the Anarchists *a really social act*: a transformation which would take place outside of all political and statist organizations, and all out-moded social systems — both governmental and authoritarian.

But the Bolsheviks pretended to wage the Revolution specifically with the aid of an omnipotent State, of an all-powerful government, of dictatorial power.

If a revolution did not abolish the State, the government, and politics, the Anarchists did not consider it a social revolution, but simply a political revolution — which of course might be more or less coloured by social elements.

But achievement of power and organization of “their” government and “their” State spelled the Social Revolution for the “Communists” [the label which the Bolsheviki adopted later].

In the minds of the Anarchists, social revolution meant *destruction of the State and capitalism at the same time*, and the birth of a new society based on another form of social organization.

For the Bolsheviks, social revolution meant, on the contrary, the *resurrection of the State* after the abolition of the bourgeois State — that is to say, the creation of a powerful new State for the purpose of “constructing Socialism”.

The Anarchists held it impossible to institute Socialism by means of the State.

The Bolsheviki maintained that it could be achieved only through the State.

This difference of interpretation was, as will readily be seen, fundamental.

(I recall big posters on a wall in Petrograd, at the time of the October Revolution, announcing lectures by Trotsky on *The Organization of Power*. "A typical and fatal error," I said to comrades, "for if it is a question of social revolution, one should be concerned with organizing the Revolution and not with organizing power.")

Respective interpretation of the call for *immediate peace* also was notably different.

To the Anarchists that slogan was a call for direct action by the armed masses themselves, over the heads of the governors, the politicians, and the generals. According to the anarchists, those masses should leave the front and return to the country, thus proclaiming to the world their refusal to fight stupidly for the interests of the capitalists and their disgust with the shameful butchery. Such a gesture, frank, integrated, decisive — the Anarchists believed — would produce an enormous effect upon the soldiers of the other nations, and might lead, in the last analysis, to the end of the war, perhaps even to its transformation into a world revolution. They thought that it was necessary, taking advantage of the immensity of Russia, to draw the enemy on, cut him off from his bases, cause his Army to disintegrate, and put him out of the fighting.

The Bolsheviks, however, were afraid of such direct action. Politicians and statists, they wanted a peace through political and diplomatic channels, the fruit of discussions with the German generals and "plenipotentiaries".

The land to the peasants! the factories to the workers! By these words the Anarchists understood that, without being the I property of anyone, the land should be put at the disposal of all those who desired to cultivate it (without exploiting anyone) i and of their associations and federations, and that likewise the factories, works, mines, machines, et cetera, should be at the disposal of all the workers' productive associations and their federa- j tions. Methods and details of this activity would be regulated by those associations and federations, by free agreement.

But to the Bolsheviki this same slogan meant the nationalization of all those elements. For them the land, the works, the factories, the mines, the

machines, and the means of transport should be *the property of the State*, which would permit the workers to use them.

Again, the difference of interpretation was fundamental.

As for the masses themselves, intuitively they understood all those slogans rather in the libertarian sense. But, as we have said earlier, the voice of Anarchism was relatively so weak that the vast masses didn't hear it. It seemed to them that only the Bolsheviks dared to proclaim and defend these glorious and just principles. This was all the more true in that the Bolshevik Party proclaimed itself every day on the street corners as being the only party struggling for the interests of the city workers and the peasants; *the only party* which, once in power, would know how to achieve the Social Revolution.

"*Workers and peasants! The Bolshevik Party is the only one which defends you. No other party knows how to lead you to victory. Workers and peasants! The Bolshevik Party is your own party. It is the only party that is really yours. Help it to take power and you will triumph.*"

This *leitmotif* of the Bolshevik propaganda finally became an obsession. Even the left Social Revolutionary Party, which was much stronger than the small Anarchist groups, could not rival the Bolsheviks. However, it was then strong enough so that the Bolsheviki had to reckon with it and offer it, for some time, seats in the government.

Finally, it is interesting to compare the position of the Bolsheviks to that of the Anarchists, on the eve of the October Revolution, *on the question of the workers' soviets*.

The Bolsheviki expected to achieve the Revolution, on the one hand, through an insurrection of these Soviets, which were demanding "all power" for themselves, and, on the other hand, through military insurrection which would support the action of the Soviets (the whole proceedings of course under the immediate and effective direction of the party). The working masses had the task of vigorously supporting this action, In perfect accord with their point of view and their "tactics", the Bolsheviks launched the general slogan of the Revolution: "*All power to the Soviets!*."

As for the Anarchists, they were suspicious of this slogan and for good reason — they knew well that that formula did not at all correspond with the real plans of the Bolshevik Party. *They knew that* in the last analysis *the latter sought highly centralized power for itself*. (That is, for its central committee and ultimately for its leader, Lenin, who, aided by Trotsky, as is

now generally known, directed all the preparations for the taking of power).

“All power to the Soviets!” was therefore, in reality, according to the Anarchists, only an empty formula, subject to being filled later with any kind of content. And it was a false, hypocritical, deceptive formula — for, the Anarchists declared, if “power” really should belong to the Soviets, it could not belong to the Bolshevik Party, and if it should belong to that Party, as the Bolsheviks envisaged, it could not belong to the Soviets.

That is why the Anarchists, while admitting that the Soviets should perform certain functions in the building of the new society, did not accept the formula without reservations. To them, the word power rendered it ambiguous, suspect, illogical, and demagogic. They knew that, by its very nature, political power could not really be exercised except by a very restricted group of men at the centre. Therefore this power — the *real* power — could not belong to the Soviets. It would actually be in the hands of the party. Then what did the formula “All power to the Soviets” truly mean?

Comment and doubts having to do with that theme were expressed by the Anarcho-Syndicalists in an editorial entitled *Is This the End?*, published in their weekly, *Golos Truda*.[7] Pointed 0uestions were asked in that editorial.

> “Will the eventual realization of the formula, *All power to the Soviets* — rather the eventual taking of political power — *be the end*? Wili this be all? Will this act accomplish the destructive work of the Revolution? Will it completely prepare the ground for the great social construction, for the creative spirit of the people in revolt? Will the victory of the ‘Soviets’ — if it is achieved — and, again, the ‘organization of power’ which will follow it, effectively signify the victory of labor, *of the organized forces of the workers*, the beginning of genuine Socialist construction?
>
> Will this victory and this new ‘power’ succeed in leading the Revolution out of the impasse in which it finds itself? Will they manage to open new *creative* horizons for the Revolution, for the masses, for everyone? Are they going to point out *the true course* for the Revolution to constructive work, the effective solution for all the burning questions of the period?”

It would all depend, the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ contended, on what interpretation the conquerors put on the word *power* and their idea of the *organization of power*. It would depend, too, on the way in which the victory would be utilized by the elements holding power after that victory.

Plainly pessimistic, the editors of *Golos Truda* cited several circumstances vitally necessary to a just and equitable handling of the situation by the Bolsheviki. Only *if* certain factors existed, they averred, could the new crisis become the last one; only then could it signify the beginning of a new era. Those factors embodied five *ifs*:

> "If by 'power' one wishes to say that all creative work and all organizational activity throughout the whole country will be in the hands of *the workers' and peasants' organizations*, supported by the armed masses;
>
> If one understands by 'power' the full right of these organizations to carry on this activity and to federate to this end ... thus beginning the new economic and social construction which will lead the Revolution to new horizons of peace, economic equality, and true liberty;
>
> If ... 'power to the Soviets' does not signify installation of lobbies of a political power ... ;
>
> If, finally, the political party aspiring to power ... liquidates itself after the victory and yields its place effectively to a free self-government of the workers; and
>
> If the 'power of the Soviets' does not become, in reality, statist power of a new political party."

But, the Anarcho-Syndicalists held, if "power" actually meant the activity of the authoritarian and political lobbies of the Bolshevik Party, lobbies directed by its principal authoritarian and political centre (the central power of the party and the State); if the; "taking of power by the Soviets" really meant usurpation of power by a new political party, for the purpose of reconstructing, by means of this power, from above and by that "centre", the whole economic and social life of the country, and thus resolving the complex problems of the moment and of the period — *then this new stage of the Revolution would not be the final stage either.*

Golos Truda did not doubt for an instant, it stated, that "this new power" would neither begin nor understand the real Socialist construction, nor even satisfy the immediate essential needs and interests of the population.

And it did not doubt that the masses would quickly become disenchanted with their new idols and be forced to turn to other solutions after having disavowed those new gods. Then, after an interval — of uncertain length — the struggle would of necessity begin again. This would be the commencement of the third and last stage of the Russian Revolution — a stage which would be a Great Revolution in itself.

> "This will be a struggle [the editorial continued] between the living forces of the creative spirit of the masses, on the one hand, and the Social Democratic power, with its centralist spirit, defending itself bitterly, on the other. In other words: a struggle between the workers' and peasants' organizations acting directly and on their own, taking the land and all the means of production, transport, and distribution, to establish, in complete independence, a really new human existence — this on the one hand, and the Marxist political authority on the other; a struggle between the authoritarian and libertarian systems; a contest between two principles which have been battling for pre-eminence for a long time: the Marxist principle and the Anarchist principle."

And, the Anarcho-Syndicalist editors concluded, *only a complete and definitive victory of the Anarchist principle* — the principle of the free and natural self-organization of the masses — would spell a true victory for the Great Revolution.

They did not believe, they declared, in the possibility of achieving the Social Revolution through the political process. They did not believe that the work of new social construction, and the solution of the vast, varied, and complex problems of that time could be achieved through a political act, by the taking of power by the top or centre. "Those who live," they predicted, "shall see!

[7] Petrograd, October 20, 1917.

Chapter 2. Anarchist Position on the October Revolution

On the same day, the Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda published a statement in *Golos Truda* in which it indicated clearly its position on the question of political power. It summed up the situation in two compact paragraphs:

> "1. Inasmuch as we give the slogan 'All power to the Soviets', an entirely different meaning from that which, in our opinion, is given by the Social Democratic Bolshevik Party, 'called upon by events to lead the movement'; inasmuch as we do not believe in the broad perspectives of a revolution which begins with a political act, that is, by the taking of power; inasmuch as we do not support any action of the masses for political goals and under the control of a political party; and finally, inasmuch as we conceive of an entirely different way, both for the beginning and the subsequent development of a real social revolution, we do not support the present movement.
>
> "2. Nevertheless, if the [proposed] action by the masses should commence, then, as Anarchists, we will participate in it with the greatest possible energy. For we cannot put ourselves out of touch with the revolutionary masses, even if they are not following our course and our appeals, and even if we foresee the defeat of the movement. We never forget that it is impossible to foresee either the direction or the result of a movement by the masses. Consequently, we consider it our duty always to participate in such a movement, seeking to communicate our meaning, our ideas, our truth, to it."

Chapter 3. Other Disagreements

Beside the great divergences of principle which separated the Anarchists and the Bolsheviks, there existed differences of detail between them. Let us mention the two most important incidental points of variance — the question of the purported "workers' control of production" and that of the Constituent Assembly.

Contemplating the workers' problem, the Bolshevik Party prepared to begin [moving toward a solution] by instituting the so-called *workers' control of production* — that is, the introduction of workers into the management of private enterprises.

The Anarchists objected that if this "control" were not to remain a dead letter, and if the workers' organizations were capable 6f exercising effective control, then they also were capable of guaranteeing all production. In such an event, private industry could be eliminated quickly, but progressively, and replaced by collective industry. Consequently, the Anarchists rejected the vague nebulous slogan of "control of production". They advocated *expropriation — progressive, but immediate — of private industry by the organizations of collective production*.

We want to emphasize, in that connection, that it is absolutely false — I insist on this, because the false assertion, sustained by ignorant people and by those of bad faith, has been fairly widespread — it is false, I say, that in the course of the Russian Revolution, the Anarchists knew only how to "destroy" and "criticize", "without being able to formulate the least positive ideas". And it is false that the Anarchists "did not themselves possess, and therefore never expressed sufficiently clear ideas on the application of their own conception". In looking through the libertarian press of the period [in Russia] (*Golos Truda*, *Anarchy, Nabat*, et cetera), one can see that this literature *abounded* in clear and practical expositions of the role and functioning of the workers' organizations, as well as the method of action which would, permit the latter, in! co-operation with the peasants, to replace the destroyed capitalist and statist mechanism.

What the Anarchists lacked in the Russian Revolution was not clear and precise ideas, but, as we have said, *institutions* able, from the start, to apply those ideas to life. And it was the Bolsheviks who, to achieve their own plans, opposed the creation and the functioning of such institutions.

The [Anarchist] ideas, clear and exact, were formulated, the masses were intuitively ready to understand them and to apply them with the help of the

revolutionaries, intellectuals, and specialists. The necessary institutions were sketched out and could have \ been rapidly oriented toward the true goal with the aid of the same elements. But the Bolsheviki deliberately prevented the spreading of those ideas and that enlightened assistance, and the activity of the [projected] institutions. *For they wanted action only for themselves and under the form of political power.*

This complex of facts, specific and incontestable, is basic for ; anyone who seeks to understand the development and meaning of the Russian Revolution. The reader will find in these pages numerous examples — chosen from among thousands — bearing out 1 my statements, point by point.

We come now to the other controversial issue mentioned — the Constituent Assembly.

To continue the Revolution and transform it into a social revolution, the Anarchists saw no utility in calling such an assembly, an institution essentially political and bourgeois, cumbersome and sterile, an institution which, by its very nature, placed itself "above the social struggles" and concerned itself only, by means of dangerous compromises, with stopping the Revolution, and even suppressing it if possible.

So the Anarchists tried to make known to the masses the uselessness of the Constituent Assembly, and the necessity of going beyond it and replacing it at once with economic and social organizations, *if they really wanted to begin a social revolution*.

As seasoned politicians, the Bolsheviks hesitated to abandon the Constituent Assembly frankly. (Its convocation, as we have seen, occupied a prominent place on their programme before the seizure of power). This hesitation had several reasons behind it: Onthe one hand, the Bolsheviki did not see any inconvenience in having the Revolution "stopped" at the stage where it was, provided they remained masters of power. The Assembly could serve their interests if, for example, its majority were Bolsheviks or if the Deputies approved their direction and their acts. On the other hand, the masses were closely attached to [the idea of] the Assembly, and it was not prudent to contradict them in the beginning. Finally, the Bolsheviks did not feel themselves strong enough to risk furnishing a trump card to their enemies, who, recalling the formal promises of the party before the seizure of power, could cry *Treason!* and disturb the masses.

For, since the latter were not thoroughly curbed and subjugated, their spirit was on guard, and their temper was very changeable; the example of

the Kerensky government still fresh in memory. Finally, the party decided on this solution: to proceed with the calling of the Constituent Assembly, while supervising the elections minutely and exerting maximum effort to make sure that the results were favourable to the Bolsheviki regime.

If the Assembly was pro-Bolshevik, or at least docile and without real importance, it would be manoeuvred and used for the ends of the government. If, however, the Assembly was not favourable to Bolshevism, the leaders of the party would observe closely the reactions of the masses, and dissolve the gathering on the first favourable occasion. To be sure, the game was somewhat risky. But counting on its vast and profound popularity, and also on the lack of power in the hands of the Assembly, which, moreover, was certain to compromise itself if it took a stand against Bolshevism, the risk was accepted. The events which followed demonstrated that the Bolshevik Party did not deceive itself.

Fundamentally, the promise of the Bolsheviks to call the Constituent Assembly as soon as they assumed power, was to them, only a demagogic formula. In their game, it was a card which might win everything at one toss. If the Assembly validated their power, their position would speedily and peculiarly be confirmed throughout the country and abroad. If the contrary should be the case, they felt that they had sufficient strength to be able to get rid of the Assembly without difficulty.

Chapter 4. Some Reflections

Naturally the popular masses could not recognize all the subtleties of these different interpretations. It was impossible for them — even when they had made some contact with our ideas — to understand the real significance of the differences in question. The Russian workers, of all the workers in the world, were the least familiar with political matters. They could not be aware either of the machiavellianism or the danger of the Bolshevik interpretation.

I recall the desperate efforts with which I tried to warn the city workers, in so far as it was possible, by word of mouth and by writing, of the imminent danger for the true Revolution in the event that the masses let the Bolshevik Party intrench itself solidly in power.

In vain I argued; the masses did not recognize the danger. How many times did they object in words like these: “Comrade, we understand you well. And moreover, we are not *too* confident. We agree that it is necessary for us to be somewhat on guard, not to believe blindly, and to maintain in ourselves a prudent distrust. But, up to the present, the Bolsheviks have never betrayed us. They march straightforwardly with us, they are our friends. And they claim that once they are in power they can easily make our aspirations triumph. That seems true to us. Then why should we reject them? Let us help them win power, and we will see afterward.”

Unheeded, I pointed out that the goals of the Social Revolution could never be realized by means of political power. To doubting listeners I repeated that once organized and armed, the Bolshevik power, while admittedly as inevitably impotent as the others, would be infinitely more dangerous for the workers and Wore difficult to defeat than they had been. But invariably those to whom I talked replied in this wise:

“Comrade, it was we, the masses, who overthrew Tsarism. It was we who overthrew the bourgeois government. And it is we who are ready to overthrow Kerensky. So, if you are right, and if the Bolsheviki have the misfortune of betraying us, and of not keeping their promises, we will overthrow them as we did the others. And then we will march finally and only with our friends the Anarchists.”

Again in vain I pointed out that for various reasons, the Bolshevik State would be much more difficult to overthrow. But the workers would not, or could not, believe me.

All this, however, is not at all astonishing when in countries familiar with political methods and where (as in France) they are more or less disgusted with them, the labouring masses and even the intellectuals, while wishing for the Revolution, are still unable to understand that the installation in power of a political party, even of the extreme left, and the building of a State, whatever its label, will lead to the death of the Revolution. Could it be otherwise in a country such as Russia, which never had had the slightest political experience?

Returning on their battleships from Petrograd to Kronstadt after the victory of October, 1917, the revolutionary sailors soon began discussing the danger that might result simply from the existence of the Council of People's Commissars in power. Some maintained, notably, that this political *sanhedrin* was capable of some day betraying the principles of the October Revolution. But, on the whole, the sailors, primarily impressed by its easy victory, declared while brandishing their weapons: "In that case, since the cannons have known how to take the Winter Palace, they will know how to take Smolny also." (The former Smolny Institute in Petrograd was the first seat of the Bolshevik government, immediately after the victory.)

As we know, the political, statist, governmental idea had not yet been discredited in the Russia of 1917. And it still has not been discredited in any other country. Time and other historical experiences certainly are needed in order that the masses [everywhere], enlightened at the same time by propaganda, will finally be made entirely aware of the falsity, the vanity, the peril of the idea.

On the night of the famous day of October 25, I was on a street in Petrograd. It was dark and quiet. In the distance a feW scattered rifle shots could be heard. Suddenly an armoured car passed me at full speed. From inside the car, a hand threw a packet of leaflets which flew in all directions. I bent down and picked one up. It was an announcement by the new government to "workers and peasants" telling of the fall of the Kerensky government, and giving a list of the "People's Commissars" of the new regime, Lenin at the head.

A complex sentiment of sadness, rage, and disgust, but also a sort of ironic satisfaction, took hold of me. "Those imbeciles (if they are not simply demagogic imposters, I thought) must imagine that thus they have achieved the Social Revolution! Oh, well, they are going to see ... And the masses are going to learn a good lesson!"

Who could have foreseen at that moment that only three years and four months later, in 1921, on the glorious days of February 25 to 28, the

workers of Petrograd would revolt against the new “Communist” government? ’

There exists an opinion which has some support among Anarchists. It is maintained that, under the prevailing conditions [in October, 1917], the Russian Anarchists, momentarily renouncing their negation of politics, parties, demagogy, and power, should have acted “like Bolsheviks”, that is to say, should have formed a sort of political party and endeavoured to take power *provisionally*. In that event, it is asserted, they could have “carried the masses” with them, defeated the Bolsheviki, and seized power “to organize Anarchism subsequently”.

I consider this reasoning fundamentally and dangerously false.

Even if the Anarchists, in such a contingency, had won the victory (which is exceedingly doubtful), that winning, bought at the price of the “momentary” abandonment of the basic principle of Anarchism, never could have led to the triumph of that principle. Carried away by the force and logic of events, the Anarchists in power — what nonsense! — could only have achieved *a variety of Bolshevism*.

(I believe that the recent events in Spain and the position of certain Spanish Anarchists who accepted posts in the government I thus throwing themselves into the void of “politics” and reducing to nothing the real Anarchist action, confirms, to a large extent, my point of view.)

If such a method could have achieved the result sought, if it were possible to fight power with power, Anarchism would have no reason to exist. “In principle” everybody is an “Anarchist” If the Communists, the Socialists, *et al.*, are not so in reality, it is precisely because they believe it possible to arrive at a libertarian order by way of politics and power. (I speak of sincere people). Therefore, if one wants to suppress power by means of power and the “carried away masses” one is a Communist, a Socialist, or anything you like, but one is not an Anarchist. One is an Anarchist, specifically, because one holds it impossible to suppress power, authority, and the State with the aid of power, authority, and the State (and the “carried away masses”). Whenever one has recourse to such means — even if only “momentarily” and with very good intentions — one ceases to be an Anarchist, one renounces Anarchism, one rallies to the Bolshevik principle.

The idea of seeking to carry the masses along with power is contrary to Anarchism, which does not believe that man can ever achieve his true emancipation by that method.

I recall, in this connection, a conversation with our widely known

comrade, Maria Spiridonova, animator of the left Social Revolutionary Party, in 1919 or 1920 in Moscow. (At the risk of her own life, she assassinated, in the old days, one of the most ferocious satraps of the Tsar. She endured tortures, barely missed death [by hanging], and remained imprisoned a long time. Freed by the Revolution of February, 1917, she joined the left Social Revolutionaries and became one of their pillars. She was one of the most sincere revolutionists, devoted, respected, esteemed.)

During our discussion. Maria Spiridonova told me that the left Social Revolutionaries believed in power in a very restricted form; a power reduced to a minimum, accordingly very weak, very humane, and especially very provisional. “Just the bare minimum, permitting it, as quickly as possible, to weaken, to crumble, and to disappear!”

“Don’t fool yourself,” I advised her. “Power is never a ball of sand, which, when it is rolled, disintegrates. It is, on the contrary a snowball, which, when rolled, increases in size. Once in power, you would do like the others.”

And so would the Anarchists, I might add.

In the same connection, I remember another striking incident.

In 1919 I was active in the Ukraine. By that time the Russian masses already were keenly disillusioned about Bolshevism. The Anarchist propaganda in Ukrainia (where the Bolsheviks had not yet totally suppressed it) had begun to achieve a lively success.

One night some Red soldiers, delegated by their regiments, came to the seat of our Kharkov group and told us this: “Several units of the garrison here are fed up with the Bolsheviks. They sympathize with the Anarchists, and are ready to act. One of these nights they could easily arrest the members of the Bolshevik government of the Ukraine and proclaim an Anarchist government, which certainly would be better. Nobody would oppose it. Everybody has had enough of the Bolshevik power. Therefore we ask the Anarchist Party to come to an agreement with us, to authorize us to act in its name in preparing this action, to proceed to arrest the present government, and to take power in its place, with our help. We put ourselves completely at the disposition of the Anarchist Party.”

Of course the misunderstanding was evident. The term “Anarchist Party” alone bore witness to it. These good soldiers had no idea of what Anarchism really meant. They may have heard it spoken of vaguely or attended some meeting.

But the fact was there. Two alternative solutions were available to us: either to take advantage of this misunderstanding, have the Bolshevik government arrested, and "take power" in the Ukraine; or explain to the soldiers their mistake, give them an understanding of the fundamental nature of Anarchism, and renounce the adventure.

Naturally we chose the second solution. And for two hours I set forth our viewpoint to the regimental delegates.

"If," I said to them, "the vast masses of Russia arise in a new revolution, frankly abandoning the Government and conscious that they need not replace it with another to organize their life on a new basis, that would be the proper, the true Revolution, and all the Anarchists would march with the masses. But if we — a group of men — arrest the Bolshevik government to put ourselves in their place, nothing basic is changed. And subsequently, carried along by the very same system, we could not do any better! than the Bolsheviki."

Finally the soldiers understood my explanations, and left swearing to work henceforth for the true Revolution and the Anarchist idea.

What is inconceivable is that there exist in our day "Anarchists" — and not a few of them — who still reproach me because we did not "take power" at that time. According to them, we should have gone ahead and arrested the Bolshevik government and installed ourselves in their place. They maintain that we lost a good opportunity to realize our ideas — with the help of power. But that would have been contrary to our principles.

How many times have I said to an audience, in the midst of the Revolution: "Never forget that no one can do anything for you, in your place, above you. The 'best' government can only become bankrupt. And if someday you learn that I, Voline, tempted by politics and authoritarianism, have accepted a governmental post, have become a 'commissar', a 'minister', or something similar, two weeks later, comrades, you may shoot me with an easy conscience, knowing that I have betrayed the truth, the true cause, and the true Revolution."

Part III. After October

Chapter 1. The Bolsheviks in Power; Differences Between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists

Struggle between the two concepts of the Social-Revolution — the statist-centralist and the libertarian-federalist ideas -was unequal in the Russia of 1917. The statist conception won, and the Bolshevik government took over the vacant throne. Lenin was its undisputed leader. And to him and his party fell the task of liquidating the war, facing up to all the problems of the Revolution, and leading it onto the course of the real Social Revolution.

Having the upper hand, the political idea was going to prove itself. We shall see how it did this.

The new Bolshevik regime was in fact a government of intellectuals, of Marxist doctrinaires. Installed in power, claiming to represent the workers, and to be the only group that knew the correct way to lead them to Socialism, they expected to govern, above all, by decrees and laws which the labouring masses would be obliged to sanction and apply.

In the beginning that regime and its chief, Lenin, gave the appearance of being the faithful servants of the will of the working people; and of justifying, in any case, their decisions, pronouncements, and activities before the workers. Thus, for example, all the Bolsheviki's initial measures, notably the decree remitting the land to the peasants (October 26) and the first official step toward immediate peace (decree of October 28) were adopted by the Congress of Soviets, which gave the Government its approval. Moreover, Lenin knew in advance that these laws would be received with satisfaction by both the people and the revolutionary circles. Fundamentally, they did nothing but sanction the existing state of affairs.

The same Lenin considered it necessary to justify before the executive committee of the Soviets the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, which occurred in January, 1918. This • action of the October Revolution deserves to be described in detail.

As the reader already knows, the Anarchists, in keeping with their whole social and revolutionary conception, were opposed to the convocation of the Assembly. Here are the terms in which they developed their point of view on that issue in *Golos Truda*, [official organ of the Union for Anarchist Propaganda in Petrograd], No. 19, November 18/De-cember 1, 1917:

Comrade — workers, peasants, soldiers, sailors, and all toilers:

We are in the midst of the election for the Constituent Assembly. It is very probable that this will soon meet and begin to sit.

All the political parties-including the Bolsheviks-put the ultimate fate of the Revolution in the hands of this central organization.

In this situation we have the duty to put you on guard against two eventual dangers:

First danger: The Bolsheviki *will not have a strong majority* in the Constituent Assembly (or may even be in a minority).

In that case, the Assembly will comprise a useless, motley, socialo-bourgeois political institution. It will be an absurd talking shop like the "State Conference" in Moscow, the "Democratic Conference" in Petrograd, the "Provisional Council of the Republic," et cetera. It will become involved in empty discussions and disputes. It will hold back the real revolution.

If we do not want to *exaggerate* this danger, it is only because we hope that in this case the masses will once again know how to save the Revolution, with weapons in hand, and will push it forward on the right road.

But in relation to this danger we should point out that the masses have no need of a hullabaloo of this type, and ought to get rid of it. Why waste energy and money to create and maintain an inept institution? (While waiting, the workers' Revolution will stop once again!) What would be the good of sacrificing more strength and blood only to combat later "this stupid and sterile institution" in order to "save the Revolution" (how many times again?) and get it out of "a dead end"? That strength and those efforts could be employed to the greater advantage of the Revolution, the people, and the whole country at large, *in organizing the labouring masses in a direct way and from the very bottom*, alike in the villages, the cities, and in the various enterprises, uniting the [resultant]

organizations from below, into communes and federations of free villages and cities, in a direct and natural manner. All that would need to be done on the basis of work and not of politics nor of membership in this or that party — and this would lead later to regional unification. Likewise that strength and those efforts could and should be employed in organizing immediately and energetically the supplying of enterprises with raw materials and fuel, in improving means of communication, in organizing exchange and the entire new economy in general and, finally, in carrying on a direct fight against the remains of reaction, especially against the gravely threatening movement of Kaledin in the central region.

Second danger: The Bolsheviki *will have a strong majority* in the Constituent Assembly.

In such an event, having easily succeeded in overcoming the "opposition" and wiping it out without difficulty, they will become, in a firm and solid manner, the legal masters of the country and of the whole situation — and masters manifestly recognized by "the majority of the population." That is precisely what the Bolsheviks want to obtain from the Constituent Assembly. That is what they need — that the Assembly consolidate and "legalize" their power.

Comrades, *this danger is much more important, much more serious than the first*. Be on your guard!

Once their power is consolidated and "legalized," the Bolsheviks — who are Social Democrats, that is, men of centralist and authoritarian action — will begin to re-arrange the life of the country and of the people by governmental and dictatorial methods, imposed by the centre. Their seat in Petrograd will dictate the will of the party to all Russia, and command the whole nation. *Your Soviets and your other local organizations will become, little by little, simply executive organs of the will of the central government.* In place of healthy, constructive work by the labouring masses, in place of free unification from the bottom, we will see the installation of an authoritarian and statist apparatus which would act from above and set about wiping out everything that stood in its way

with an iron hand. The Soviets and other organizations will have to obey and do its will. That will be called "discipline." Too bad for those who are not in agreement with the central power and who do not consider it correct to obey it! Strong by reason of the "general approbation" of the populace, that power will force them to submit.

Be on guard, comrades!

Watch carefully and remember.

The more the success of the Bolsheviks becomes established, and the firmer their situation, the more their action will take on an authoritarian aspect, and the more clear-cut will be their consolidation and defense of their political power. They will begin to give more and more categorical orders to the Soviets and other local organizations. They will put into effect from above their own policies without hesitating to use armed force in case of resistance.

The more their success is upheld, the more that danger will exist, for the actions of the Bolsheviks will become all the more secure and certain. Each new success will turn their heads further. Every additional day of achievement by Lenin's party will mean increasing peril to the Revolution.

Furthermore, you can already see this now.

Study carefully the latest orders and plans of the new authority. You can already now clearly see the tendency of the Bolshevik leaders to arrange the lives of the people in a political and authoritarian manner, by means of a center which imposes itself on them. You can already see them give formal orders to the country. You can already see that those leaders understand the slogan "Power to the Soviets" to mean power for the central authority in Petrograd, an authority to which the Soviets and other local organizations must be subjugated as simple executive organs.

This is happening *now*, when the Bolshevik leaders still feel strongly dependent on the masses and are obviously

afraid of provoking disillusionment; it is happening now, when their success is not yet totally guaranteed and still depends completely on the attitude of the masses toward them.

What will happen when their success becomes a fait accompli and the masses accept them with enthusiastic and firm confidence?

Comrade workers, peasants and soldiers!

Don't ever lose sight of this danger!

Be ready to defend the real Revolution and the real freedom of your organizations and your action, wherever you are, against the violence and the yoke of the new Authority, the new Master: the centralized State and the new imposters: the heads of the political parties.

Be ready to act in such a way as to turn the success of the Bolsheviks — if these successes transform them to imposters — into their graves.

Be ready to resuce the Revolution from a new prison.

Don't forget that *only you* may and can construct and create your I new life by means of your free local organizations and their federations, j If not, you will never see it. The Bolsheviks often tell you the same thing. All the better, naturally, if in the final analysis, they act according to what they say.

But comrades, all new masters, whose position depends on the sympathy and the confidence of the masses, speak sweetly in the beginning. In the first days, Kerensky also had a honeyed voice; the heart of gall is revealed later.

Observe and take note, not of *words* and *speeches* but of *gestures* and *acts*. And as soon as you discover the slightest contradiction between what these people tell you and what they do, be on guard!

Don't trust in words, comrades. Trust only in deeds!

Don't trust the Constituent Assembly, the parties, or the leaders. Have confidence only in yourselves and in the

> Revolution. Only yourselves — that is, your local grass-root organizations, organizations of the workers and not of the parties, and then your direct and natural unification (along regional lines) — only vow can be the builders and the masters of the new life, and not the Constituent Assembly, not a central government, not the parties nor the leaders!

And in an editorial headed “Instead of a Constituent Assembly,” in the following issue of *Golos Truda* (No. 21, December 2/15, 1917), the anarchists said:

> It is well known that we Anarchists repudiate the Constituent Assembly, considering it not only useless, but frankly harmful to the use 0f the Revolution. However, only a few are yet aware of the *reasons* for our point of view. And what is essential is not the fact that we oppose the Assembly, but the *reasons* which lead us to do so. But it is not through caprice, obstinacy, or the spirit of contradiction that we reject that Assembly.
>
> Moreover, we do not confine ourselves to “purely and simply” rejecting it; we arrive at that rejection in a perfectly logical way. We believe, in fact, that in a time of social revolution, what is important for the workers is for them to organize their new life themselves, from the bottom, and with the help of their immediate economic organizations, and not from above, by means of an authoritarian political centre.
>
> We reject the Constituent Assembly, and we offer in its place an entirely different “constituent” institution — *an organization of labour* unified from below in a natural manner. We spurn the Assembly because we propose something else. And we don’t want this other thing to be threatened by the Constituent Assembly.
>
> While the Bolsheviks recognize, on the one hand, the direct class organization of the workers (in Soviets, etc.) on the other hand they preserve the Constituent Assembly, that inept and useless organization. We consider this duality contradictory, harmful, and exceedingly dangerous. It is the inevitable result of the fact that the Bolsheviks, as true Social Democrats, are generally mixed up in questions of “politics” and

> “economics,” “authority” and “non-authority,” “party” and “class.” They dare not renounce the dead prejudices definitively and completely, for that would be like throwing themselves into water without knowing how to swim.
>
> To get involved in contradictions is inevitable for people who, during a proletarian revolution, consider their principal task to be the organizing of power. To oppose this “organization of power” we would substitute for it “*the organization of the Revolution.*”
>
> “The organization of power” leads logically to the Constituent Assembly. “The organization of the Revolution” leads, also logically, to another building, where there simply would be no room for that Assembly, and where it would be strictly in the way. That is why we oppose the Constituent Assembly.

The Bolsheviks preferred to convoke the Assembly, having decided in advance to dominate it or dissolve it if its majority was not Bolshevist — a possibility under the circumstances of the moment.

So that assemblage was called together on January i§ 1918. Despite all the efforts of the Bolshevik Party, in power for three months, the majority of the Constituent Assembly turned out to be anti-Bolshevik. This development fully confirmed the expectations of the Anarchists. “If the workers,” they said, “tranquilly pursue their work of economic and social construction, without paying attention to political comedies, the great majority of the people will finally follow them, without any ceremony. And meanwhile they have on their backs this unnecessary worry.”

Nevertheless, and despite the utter uselessness of this Asl sembly, the “work” of which was pursued in an atmosphere of dismal and general indifference (everyone felt, in fact, the weakness and futility of that institution), the Bolshevik gov — ernment hesitated to end its existence.

It required the almost fortuitous intervention of an Anarchist finally to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. That is another little known historical fact.

Fate decided that an Anarchist sailor from Kronstadt, by I name Anatol Jelezniakov, be appointed by the Bolshevik regime as commander of the detachment of guards in the Tauride Palace, where the 707 delegates to the Assembly met.[8]

Throughout a long night the leaders of the various political parties made interminable speeches, which fatigued and ! exasperated the guard corps that was on duty. Hours of debate resulted in rejection of the Bolshevik platform by the Assembly majority. Then the Bolsheviki and the left Social Rvolutionaries left the session after a threatening declarator) to the representatives of the right. But other speeches followed on various issues, and kept going until dawn. Finally lelezniakov, at the head of his detachment, entered the hall 0f deliberations and marched up to the rostrum. Addressing the chairman-Victor Tchernov, leader of the right. Social Revolutionary Party, the head of the guards said: “Close the session, please, my men are tired!”

Rankled and indignant, the chairman protested.

“I tell you that the guard corps is tired,” Jelezniakov insisted, threateningly. “I ask you all to leave the Assembly Hall. And furthermore, *there has been enough of this babbling! You have prattled long enough! Get out!*”

The assemblage obeyed.

That morning, with knowledge that the delegates were scheduled to reconvene at noon, the Bolshevik government took advantage of the incident. It sent troops to occupy the meeting hall of the Constituent Assembly in the Tauride Palace, the soldiers being armed with rifles, machine-guns and two field pieces. And before the day ended, it issued a decree declaring the Assembly dissolved.

The nation remained indifferent.

Later the Lenin regime justified this act before the executive committee of the Soviets.

Thus everything had gone smoothly for the Bolsheviki — *until that day when the will of the Government entered, for the first time, into conflict with the will of the “governed,” the people*.

Then everything changed, in the face of a new German offensive.

After the October Revolution, the German Army which was operating along the Russian border remained inactive for some time. Its command hesitating, awaiting events, and maneuvering with a view to gaining the greatest possible advantage from the situation.

In February, 1918, feeling themselves ready, the Germans decided to start an offensive against Revolutionary Russia.

And now it became necessary for the Bolshevik Government to take a position. Any resistance was impossible, for the Russian Army would not fight. It was essential to find a solution of the situation. Such a solution would resolve, at the same time, the first problem of the Revolution-that of the war.

There were two possible solutions:

1. Abandon the front. Let the German Army venture into the vast territory in revolt, draw it into the depths of the country, in order to isolate it, separate it from its supply bases, make guerilla warfare against it, demoralize it, and disintegrate it, thus defending the Social Revolution — a solution which had been successfully utilized in 1812, and which was always possible in a land as huge as Russia.

2. Enter into negotiations with the German command. Propose peace to them, negotiate further, and accept it whatever the conditions.

The first of those two alternatives was that of nearly all the workers' organizations consulted, as well as that of the left Social Revolutionaries, the Maximalists, and the Anarchists. They were of the opinion that only that way of acting was worthy of a social revolution; that it alone made it conceivable to hope, as a consequence, for the breaking out of revolution in Germany and elsewhere. In short, they felt that this course — really impressive direct action — would constitute, *under existing conditions and in a country like Russia,* the only correct method of defending the Revolution.

Golos Truda, in an editorial[9] entitled *The Revolutionary Spirit*, indicated the gravity of the problem as the German onslaught was pressed. It said:

> Here we are at a decisive turn of the Revolution. It is a crisis which may be fatal. The hour which has struck is impressively clear and exceptionally tragic. The situation is finally plain. The question is in the process of being settled. In a few hours we will know whether or not the Government has signed the peace with Germany. *The whole future of the Russian Revolution and the course of world events depend on this day, on this minute*.
>
> The conditions proposed by Germany are plain and without reser-vations.
>
> The ideas of several eminent members of the political parties, antjl those of the members of the government, are already known. But there] is no unity of opinion

> anywhere. There is disagreement among the Bolj sheviks. There is disagreement among the left Socialist Revolutionaries] There is disagreement in the Council of People's Commissars, in thi Petrograd Soviet and in its Executive. There is disagreement among thi masses, in the workshops, in the factories, in the barracks. And the opirJ ion of the provinces is not yet known.

(As we mentioned earlier: the opinion of the left Social-! ist Revolutionaries, as well as the opinion of the working! masses in Petrograd and in the provinces, subsequently turned out to be hostile to the s ?ning of the peace treaty with the German generals.)

> The time limit of the German ultimatum is 48 hours. Under these conditions, whether one wants it or not, the question will be discussed! and the decision will be made in haste, and strictly in Government! circles. And that is what is most terrible ...
>
> As for our own opinion, our readers know it. From the beginning, we have been against the "peace negotiations." Today we are opposed! to signing the treaty. *We are for immediate and intensive organization of partisan resistance*. We consider that the Government's telegram asking for peace should be revoked: the challenge should be accepted andf the fate of the Revolution be put directly, frankly, in the hands of the proletarians of the whole world.
>
> Lenin insists on signing the peace. And if our information is correct, a large majority will end by following him. The treaty will be signed.
>
> Only the deep conviction of the ultimate invincibility of this revolution permits us not to take this eventuality too tragically. But this way of concluding peace would strike *a major blow at the Revolution, weakening it, debasing it, distorting it* for a long time, we are absolutely convinced.
>
> We know Lenin's argument, especially from his article *On Revolutionary Phrases*.[10] But those arguments do not convince us.

Golos Truda then made a detailed criticism of Lenin's position, and offered an argument in opposition. It insisted that acceptance of the peace offered

would slacken the Revolution, and render it for a long time feeble, anaemic, colourless. Acceptance of such a peace, it held, would warp the Revolution, bring it to its knees, clip its wings, make it crawl. “For,” the periodical concluded, “*the revolutionary spirit, the great enthusiasm for the struggle, the magnificent flight of the glorious idea of the deliverance of the world, will be taken from it.* And as for the world — its light will be extinguished.”

The majority of the Bolshevik Party’s central committee at the beginning pronounced itself in favour of the first solution. But Lenin was afraid of this bold decision. Like [any] dictator, he had no confidence in the action of the masses if they were not led by the chiefs and politicians by means of formal orders and behind-the-scenes machinations. He invoked the danger of death for the Revolution if the peace offered by the Germans was rejected. And he proclaimed the necessity of a “respite” which would permit the creation of a regular army.

For the first time since the advent of the Revolution, Lenin had to brave the opinion of the masses and even that of his own comrades. He threatened the latter, and declined all responsibility for what might happen. He declared that he would retire from the scene if his will was not carried out. His comrades, in turn, were afraid of losing “the great leader of the Revolution”. They yielded. The opinion of the masses was deliberately trampled on. A peace was signed [on March 3, 1918].[11]

Thus, for the first time, “the dictatorship of the proletariat” won over the proletariat. *For the first time, the Bolshevik power succeeded in terrorizing the masses, in substituting its will for theirs, in acting on its own, in disregarding the opinion of others.*

The peace of Brest-Litovsk was *imposed* on the working people by the Bolshevist government. The people wanted to end the war in an entirely different way. But the Government took charge of arranging everything. It precipitated matters, forced events, and this broke the resistance of the masses. It managed to keep them quiet, to obtain their obedience, *and their forced passivity*.

Incidentally, I remember meeting, in those feverish hours, the well-known Bolshevik, Nikolai Bukharin, later executed in the course of the infamous Moscow purge trials. I had previously made ins acquaintance in New York, but until then we had never seen each other in Russia. Hastening through a corridor in the Smolny Institute building in Petrograd [seat of the Bolshevik government at this time] I observed Bukharin arguing and gesticulating in a corner amid a group of Bolsheviki. He recognized me and signalled. I went over.

Without preliminaries, and filled with emotion, he began complaining about Lenin's attitude on the question of peace. He lamented that he was in complete disagreement with Lenin, and emphasized the fact that, on this point, he was wholly in agreement with the left Social Revolutionaries, the Anarchists, and the masses in general. And he declared, with consternation, that Lenin would listen to nothing, that Lenin didn't "give a damn for the opinions of others", and that he sought to impose his will and his own mistake on everybody and terrorized the party by threatening to relinquish power. According to Bukharin, Lenin's mistake was fatal for the Revolution. And that frightened him.

"But," I said to him, "if you're in disagreernent with Lenin, you have only to say so and insist on it. All the more since you are not alone in this. And moreover, even if you were alone, you have, I suppose, the same right as Lenin to have an opinion, to express it, spread it, and defend it."

"Oh," he cut in, "you don't mean it. Think what that would mean. To fight with Lenin? That would lead automatically to my expulsion from the party. That would mean a revolt against all our past, against our discipline, against the comrades in arms. I would feel myself under obligation to provoke a split in the party, to pull out the other dissidents with me, and to create another party to struggle with Lenin's. You see, old man, you know me well enough: am I of sufficient stature to become a leader of a party and to declare war on Lenin and the Bolshevik Party? No, don't let us deceive ourselves! I don't have the makings of a leader. And even if I had — No, no, I couldn't, I couldn't do that."

He was greatly excited, put his head in his hands, and almost wept.

Being in a hurry, and feeling that prolonging the discussion would be useless, I abandoned him to his despair. As we know, he later rallied to Lenin's thesis — though perhaps only in appearance.

Such was the first serious difference between the new government and the people it governed. It was resolved to the advantage of the power which imposed itself. This was the first imposture. And it was only the first — but the most difficult. From now on, things could go "by themselves". Having once encroached upon the will of the labouring masses with impunity, having once taken the initiative in action, the new power was, so to speak, a lasso around the Revolution. Later it would only have to tighten the noose, to force and finally habituate the masses to follow in its wake, to make them leave in its hands all initiative, submit completely to its authority, and reduce the whole Revolution to the proportions of a dictatorship.

That, in fact, is what happened. For, *such, inevitably, is the attitude of all governments. Such, inevitably, is the course of all revolutions which leave intact the statist, centralist, political, governmental principle.*

This course is a slope. And once [any group is] on that slope, the sliding occurs by itself. Nothing can stop it. At first neither the governing clique nor the governed perceive what is happening. The former (in so far as they are sincere) believe that they are fulfilling their role and carrying out an indispensable salutary work. The latter, fascinated, tightly gripped, and dominated, follow.

And when, finally, these two groups, and especially the latter, begin to understand their error, it is too late. It is impossible to go back, impossible even to modify anything. One is too deeply involved with the fatal slope [the downward momentum is too great]. And even if the governed cry out and take a stand againa the governing clique to make them climb back up this menacing slope, it is too late!

[8] As in many other circumstances, the Bolsheviks tried, for a long time, to distort the facts concerning Jelezniakov. They claimed, in their press, that he had become-or that he always had been a Bolshevik. It is understandable that the contrary troubled them.
At the time of Jelezniakov's death (he was mortally wounded in a battle with the "Whites" in central Russia) the Bolsheviks asserted, in a note that appeared in lzvestia, that on his death bed, he declared that he was in agreement with Bolshevism. Since then they have said squarely that he was always a Bolshevik.
All this, however, is false. The author of these lines and other comrades knew Jelezniakov intimately. When he left Petrograd for the front, taking leave of me, and knowing that as an Anarchist he could expect anything from the Bolsheviki, he said to me, word for word: "Whatever may happen to me. and whatever they may say of me, know well that 1 am an Anarchist, that i fight as one, and that whatever my fate, 1 will die an Anarchist."
And he entrusted to me the duty of demolishing, if need be, the lies of the Bolsheviks. I am here performing that duty.

[9] No. 27, February 24, 1918.

[10] In *Pravda*, No. 31.

[11] That treaty took from Russia "territories equal in size to approximately eighteen provinces".

Chapter 2. The Fatal Descent

To see what has since become of the Russian Revolution, to understand the real role of Bolshevism, and discern the reasons which — again in human history — transformed a magnificent and victorious popular revolt into a lamentable failure, it is necessary, clearly and ahead of anything else, *to comprehend fully two truths*, which, unfortunately, are still not yet widely enough known, and the misunderstanding of which deprives the majority of those interested of a true comprehension.

Here is the first truth:

There is an explicit and irreconcilable contradiction, an opposition between the true Revolution, which, on the one hand, tends to expand — *and could expand in an unlimited way* to conquer definitively — and on the other hand, the theory and practice of authoritarianism and statism. There is an explicit, irreconcilable contradiction, a struggle between the very essence of State Socialist power (if it triumphs) and that of the true Social Revolutionary process. The very substance of the real Social Revolution is the recognition and achievement of a vast and free creative movement of the labouring masses freed from all servile work. It is the affirmation and expansion of an immense process of construction based on emancipated labour, on natural co-ordination and fundamental equality.

At bottom, the true Social Revolution is the beginning of true human evolution, that is to say, a free creative ascension of the human masses, based on the vast and frank initiative of millions of men in all branches of activity. This essence of the Revolution is instinctively felt by the revolutionary people. It is more or less precisely understood and formulated by the Anarchists.

What results “automatically” from this definition of the Social Revolution (a definition which cannot be refuted) is *not* the idea of *an authoritarian direction* (dictatorial or other) of the masses — an idea belonging entirely to the old bourgeois, capitalist, exploiting world — *but that of a collaboration* to bring forward their evolution. And from it also flows the necessity of an absolutely free circulation of all revolutionary ideas and finally the need for undisguised truth, for free and general seeking of it, experimenting with it, and putting it into practice as an essential condition of a fertile action of the masses and of the complete triumph of the Revolution.

But the basis of State Socialism and delegated power is *the explicit non-*

recognition of these principles of the Social Revolution. The characteristic traits of Socialist ideology and practice (authority, power, State, dictatorship) do not belong to the future, but are wholly a part of the bourgeois past. The "statist" conception of the Revolution, the idea of a limit, of a "termination" of the revolutionary process, the tendency to dam it, to "petrify" this process, and especially (instead of allowing the labouring masses all the possibilities for an adequate and autonomous movement and action) to concentrate once more in the hands of the State and of a handful of new masters all future evolution — all that rests on old traditions of a circumscribed routine, on a worn-out model, which has nothing in common with the real Revolution.

Once this model has been applied, the true principles of the Revolution are fatally abandoned. Then follows, inevitably, the rebirth, under another name, of the exploitation of the labouring masses, with all its consequences.

Therefore, beyond doubt, the forward march of the revolutionary masses toward real emancipation, toward the creation of new forms of social life, is incompatible with the very principle of State power. And it is clear that the authoritarian principle and the revolutionary principle are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive — and that the revolutionary principle is essentially turned toward the future, while the other is tied by all its roots to the past, and thus is reactionary.

The authoritarian Socialist revolution and the [true] Social Revolution follow two opposite procedures. Consequently, one must conquer and the other perish. Either the true Revolution with its vast free and creative flood, breaking definitely with the roots of the past, triumphs on the ruins of the authoritarian principle, or it is the authoritarian principle which wins, and then the roots of the past "strangle" the real Revolution, which no longer can be achieved.

Socialist power and the Social Revolution are contradictory elements. It is impossible to reconcile them, still less to unite them; the triumph of the one means the endangering of the other with all the logical consequences, in either case. A revolution inspired by State Socialism and which entrusts its fate to it, even if only provisionally or transitionally, is lost. It is started on a false course, on an increasingly steep slope, which leads straight to the abyss.

Here is the second truth — or rather a logical ensemble of truths — which completes the first and makes it more specific:

1. *All political power inevitably creates a privileged situation* for the men who

exercise it. Thus it violates, from the beginning, the equalitarian principle and strikes at the heart of the Social Revolution — which is largely inspired by that principle.

2. All political power inevitably becomes a source of other privileges, even if it does not depend on the bourgeoisie. Having taken over the Revolution, having mastered it, and bridled it, *power is compelled to create a bureaucratic and coercive apparatus*, indispensable to all authority which wants to maintain itself, to command, to order — in a word, to "govern". Rapidly it attracts and groups around itself all sorts of elements eager to dominate and exploit.

Thus it forms a new privileged caste, at first politically and later economically: directors, functionaries, soldiers, policemen, et cetera — individuals dependent on it, and accordingly ready to support it and defend it against all others, without caring in the least about "principles" or "justice". It sows everywhere the seed of inequality and soon infects the whole social organism, which, being more and more passive to the extent that it feels the impossibility of fighting the infection, becomes itself favourable to the return to bourgeois principles in a new guise.

3. *All power* seeks more or less to take in its hands the reins of social life. It *predisposes the masses to passivity*, and all spirit of initiative is stifled by the very existence of power, in the extent to which it is exercised.

The "Communist" power, which, in principle, has concentrated 1 everything in its own hands, is, in this connection, a veritable trap. I Puffed up with its own "authority" and filled with its pretended "responsibility" (with which, at bottom, it endowed itself), it is afraid of all independent action. All autonomous initiative imme-diately appears suspect [in its eyes] and threatens it; so it tries to I diminish and thwart any such action. For it wants to hold the tiller and to hold it alone. Initiative by anyone else seems to it 1 to be an invasion of its territory and its prerogatives. Such [independent motion] is insupportable to that power. And it is disregarded, rejected, and stamped out, or carefully supervised and I controlled, with a "logic" and persistence that is abominable and 1 pitiless.

The tremendous new creative forces which are latent in the masses thus remain unused. This applies as much to the field 1 of action as to that of thought. With respect to the latter, the "Communist" power has distinguished itself everywhere by abso- i lute intolerance, which can be compared only to that of the Holy Inquisition. For, on another plane, this power also has considered itself to be the only bearer of truth and safety, neither accepting nor tolerating any contradiction, or any way of conceiving or think-« ing other than its own.

4. No political power is capable of solving effectively the gigantic constructive problems of the Revolution. The “Com- I munist” power which took over this enormous task and pretended to accomplish it, demonstrated itself, in this respect, to be par- [I ticularly inept. In fact, its pretensions consisted of wanting, and j being in a position, to “direct” the whole titanic activity, infinitely varied, of millions of human beings. To do this successfully, it would have had to be able to embrace at all times the incommen- 1 surable and moving immensity of life: to have been able to know everything, supervise everything, arrange everything, organize everything, lead everything. It is a question of an incalculable number of needs, interests, activities, situations, combinations, and transformations — and therefore of problems of all kinds, in con- 9 tinual motion.

Soon, not knowing any more where to give leeway, the power S ended by no longer embracing anything, arranging anything, or “directing” anything at all. And, in the first place, it showed itself absolutely powerless to organize effectively the disoriented economic life of Russia. This quickly disintegrated. Completely dislocated, jt floundered, in a disorderly way, between the ruins of the fallen regime and the powerlessness of the newly proclaimed system.

Under these circumstances, the incompetence of the [“Communist”] power [in Russia] led, in a short time, to an economic collapse. This meant the stopping of industrial activity, the ruin of agriculture, the destruction of all connections between the various branches of the [national] economy, and the destruction of all economic and social equilibrium.

Inevitably, this resulted, in the beginning, in a policy of constraint — especially in relation to the peasants. They were forced, in spite of everything, to feed the cities. But that procedure proved ineffective, because the peasants had recourse to passive resistance, and poverty became the mistress of the whole country. Work, production, transport, and exchange were disorganized and fell into a chaotic state.

5. To maintain the economic life of the country at an endurable level, power has, in the last analysis, only constraint, violence, and terror as its agents. It resorts to these more and more widely and methodically. But the country continues to flounder in frightful poverty, to the point of famine.

The flagrant impotence of power to establish a healthy economic life, the manifest sterility of the Revolution, the physical and moral suffering created by this situation for millions of individuals, a violence which increased every day in despotism and intensity — such are essential factors which soon fatigue and disgust the population, making it antagonistic to the Revolution, and *thus favouring the recrudescence of anti-revolutionary*

spirit and movements. This situation incites the very numerous neutral or unconscious elements — who up to now have been hesitant and rather favourable to the Revolution — to take a firm stand against it. And finally it kills the faith of many of its own partisans.

6. *Such a state of affairs not only diverts the march of the Revolution, but also compromises the work of defending it.*

In place of having active social organizations (unions, cooperatives, associations, federations, et cetera) active, alive, healthily co-ordinated, capable of assuring the economic development of themselves against the danger of reaction (relatively mild under these circumstances) there exists, once more, a few months after the beginning of the disastrous statist practice, a handful of careerists and adventurers in power, incapable of "justifying" and substantially fortifying the Revolution that they have horribly mutilated and sterilized. Now they are obliged to defend themselves (and their partisans) against increasingly numerous enemies, whose appearance and growing activity are primarily the consequence of their own failure. Thus, instead of a natural and easy defence of the Social Revolution, which gradually affirms itself, one witnesses once more the disconcerting spectacle of failing power defending, by any means, and often the most ferocious, its own life.

This false defence is naturally organized from above, with the help of old and monstrous political and military methods "which have been proven", absolute control by the Government over the whole population, formation of a regular army blindly disciplined, creation of professional police institutions and of fanatical special bodies, suppression of freedom of speech, press, assembly, and especially of action, inauguration of a regime of repression and terror, et cetera.

It is a question, once more, of the training and brutalization j of individuals to obtain a wholly submissive force. With the abnormal conditions under which events occur, all these procedures rapidly acquire an aspect of violence and despotism. The decay of the Revolution continues apace.

8. The "revolutionary power" in bankruptcy inevitably runs up against not only enemies of "the right", but also opponents of the left, all those who feel themselves supporters of the true revolutionary idea which has sprained its foot, those who fight for it and who draw themselves up in its defence. These attack the power in the interest of the true Revolution.

But having tasted the poison of domination, of authority and its prerogatives, having persuaded itself and seeking to persuade the world that it is the only really revolutionary force able to act in the name of the

“proletariat”, believing itself “obliged” and “responsible” for the Revolution, confusing through an inevitable aberration the fate of the latter with its own, and finding pretentious explanations and justifications for all of its acts, the power neither can nor will admit its failure and disappear. On the contrary, the more it feels itself at fault and threatened, the more it sets about furiously to defend itself. It wants to remain master 0f the situation at any price. It even hopes, still and always, to “straighten things out”.

Knowing perfectly that it is a question, one way or another, of its very existence, the power ends by no longer discriminating its adversaries: it no longer distinguishes its own enemies from those of the Revolution. More and more guided by a simple instinct of self-preservation, and less and less capable of withdrawing, it begins to strike, with a crescendo of blindness and impudence, in all directions, left as well as right. It strikes without distinction all those who are not with it. Tremblmg for its own fate, it destroys the best forces of the future. It stifles the revolutionary movements which, inevitably, have arisen once more. It suppresses *en masse* the revolutionaries and the simple workers guilty of wanting to raise the banner of the Social Revolution again.

Acting thus, fundamentally impotent, strong only through terror, it is obliged to conceal its hand, to deceive, to lie, and to slander, since it considers it a good idea not to break openly with the Revolution and to maintain its prestige intact at least abroad.

9. But while crushing the Revolution it is not possible to lean on it. Also it is impossible to remain suspended in the void, supported by the precarious force of bayonets and circumstances. Therefore, in strangling the Revolution, the power is obliged to insure itself, more and more clearly and firmly, with the aid and support of reactionary and bourgeois elements, disposed through expediency to be of service to it and to deal with it.

Feeling the ground slipping from beneath its feet, becoming more and more detached from the masses, having broken its last connections with the Revolution and created a whole privileged caste of big and little dictators, servitors, flatterers, careerists, and parasites, but impotent to achieve anything really revolutionary and positive, after having rejected and destroyed the new forces, the power feels obliged to consolidate itself, to make overtures to the forces of reaction. It is their company that it seeks more and more frequently and more and more willingly. It is with them that it gives ground, not having any other way of insuring its life. Having lost the friendship of the masses, it seeks new sympathies. It hopes that it can some day betray them. But meanwhile it becomes further involved

every day in anti-revolutionary and anti-social activity.

The Revolution attacks it more and more energetically. And the power, with a fury all the more violent, helped by arms that it has forged, and by forces which it has drawn up, fights the Revolution. Soon the latter is completely defeated in this unequal struggle. It is at the point of death and disintegration. The agony ends in a corpse-like immobility. The slide has reached the bottom of the slope. [Here] is the abyss. The Revolution has had its day. Reaction is triumphant — hideously painted, arrogant, brutal, bestial.

Those who have not yet understood these truths and their implacable logic have understood nothing about the Russian Revolution. And that is why all these blind men, the "Leninists", the "Trotskyists", and all their kind are incapable of explaining plausibly the bankruptcy of the Russian Revolution and of Bolshevism — the bankruptcy which they are forced to admit. (We are not speaking here of the Western "Communists". They want . to remain blind).

Having understood nothing about the Russian Revolution, * having learned nothing from it, they are ready to repeat the same sequence of evil errors: political party, conquest of power, government ("workers and peasants"!), State ("Socialists"), Dictatorship ("of the Proletariat") — stupid platitudes, criminal contradictions, disgusting nonsense! It will be unfortunate for the next revolution if it re-animates these stinking corpses, if again it succeeds in dragging the labouring masses into this macabre game. It can only give rise to other Hitlers which grow in the decay of its ruins. And once more "its light will go out for the world".

Let us recapitulate the elements of the situation here:

The "revolutionary" government ("Socialist" or "Communist") is inaugurated. Naturally it wants full and complete power for -I itself. It is a command. (Otherwise what purpose has it?)

It is only a question of time until the first disagreement between the governors and the governed will arise. This disagreement crops up all the more inevitably inasmuch as a government, whatever it may be, is impotent to solve the problems of a great revolution, yet in spite of this, it wants to be right in everything, monopolize everything, retain for itself the initiative, the truth, and responsibility of action. This disagreement is always turned to the advantage of the rulers, who quickly learn to impose their authority by various means. And subsequently all initiative passes inevitably to these rulers, who become, little by little, the masters of the governed.

That accomplished, the “masters” cling to power, despite their incapacity, their inadequacy, their incompetency. They believe themselves, on the contrary, the only bearers of the Revolution. “Lenin (or Stalin), like Hitler, is always right”... “Workers, obey your leaders! They know what they are doing and they are working for you”... “Proletarians of all countries, unite!” (“so we can command you better”.) But this latter part of the slogan is never uttered aloud by the “genial leaders” of the “workers’ parties”.

Thus, inch by inch, the rulers become the absolute masters of the country. They create privileged classes on which they base themselves. They organize forces capable of sustaining them, and defend themselves fiercely against all opposition, all contradiction, all independent initiative. Monopolizing everything, they take over the whole life and activity of the country. And having no other way of acting, they oppress, subjugate, enslave, exploit. They repress all resistance. They persecute and wipe out, in the name of the Revolution, everyone who will not bend to their will.

To justify themselves, they lie, deceive, slander.

To stifle the truth, they are brutal. They fill the prisons and places of exile; they torture, kill, execute, assassinate.

That is what happened, exactly and inevitably, to the Russian Revolution.

Once well established in power, having organized its bureaucracy, its Army, its police, having found the money and built a new State called “Workers’”, the Bolshevik government, absolute master, took into its own hands completely the fate of the Revolution. *Progressively* — to the extent that it increased its forces of demagogic propaganda, coercion, and repression — *the Government nationalized and monopolized everything, including speech and thought*.

It was the State — and therefore the Government — which took possession of the soil, of all the lands. It became the true landlord. The peasants, as a mass, were little by little transformed, first into State farmers, and later, as will be seen, into veritable serfs. It was the Government which expropriated the works, factories, mines — in short, all the means of production, communication, and exchange. And finally, *it was the Government which became the sole master of the nation’s press and of all other means of spreading ideas*. All publications, all printed matter in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — including even visiting cards — are produced, or at least rigorously controlled, by the State.

In short, the State — therefore the [Bolshevik] government finally became the only repository of all truths [in the Russian domain], the sole

proprietor of all material and spiritual goods therein, and the sole initiator, organizer, and animator of the whole life of the country, in all of its ramifications.

The 150,000,000 “inhabitants” were progressively transformed into simple fulfillers of the Government’s orders, into veritabte slaves of the Government and its innumerable agents. “Workers, obey your leaders!”

All the economic, social, and other organizations, without exception, beginning with the Soviets and ending with the smallest-cells, became the simple administrative organs of the State enterprise, [forming in effect] a sort of “exploiting corporation of the State”: organs wholly subordinated to its “central administrative council” (the Government), supervised closely by agents of the latter (the official and secret police) and deprived of all semblance of independence.

The authentic detailed history of this evolution, completed twelve years ago — an extraordinary history, unique in the world-would require a volume in itself. We will return to it later in these pages to give some indispensable details.

The reader already knows that the stifling of the Revolution, with its disastrous logical consequences, inevitably incited a reaction more and more intense, and sustained by the elements on the left, who did not envisage the Revolution in the same way [as the Bolsheviki] and drew themselves up to defend it and enable it to progress. The most important of these refractory movements grew up in the ranks of the left Social Revolutionaries and among the Anarchists.

This rebellion of the left Social Revolutionary Party was that 0f a rival political and statist party. Its differences with the Communist Party and its disillusionment because of the disastrous results of the Bolshevik Revolution finally compelled it to oppose the Bolsheviks. Forced to leave the government in which it had collaborated for some time with [Lenin’s party], it launched an increasingly violent struggle against it. Anti-Bolshevik propaganda, attempted uprisings, and terrorist acts were used.

The left Social Revolutionaries participated in the famous assassination in Leontievsky Alley. And they organized the assassination of the German General Eichhorn in the Ukraine and of the German Ambassador Mirbach in Moscow — two violent demonstrations against the dealings of the Bolshevik government with that of Germany. Later they inspired some local uprisings, which were quickly put down. In that struggle they sacrificed some of their best forces.

Their leaders, Maria Spiridonova, B. Kamkov, A. A. Kareline, and others, as well as certain anonymous militants, behaved with much courage ia these occurrences. However, if the left Social Revolutionaries had achieved power, their actions inevitably would have been exactly like those of the Bolshevik Party. The same political system inescapably would have led to the same results.

Fundamentally, the left Social Revolutionaries rose up primarily against the hegemony and the monopoly of the Communist Party. They claimed that if power were shared equally by two or more parties, instead of being monopolized by a single one, everything would be for the best. In the nature of things, this was a distinct error.

The active elements of the laboring masses, who, having understood the reasons for the bankruptcy of Bolshevism, attempted a battle against it, knew this well. They only supported the left Social Revolutionaries in a very restricted way. Their resistance was quickly broken, and they did not create any great echo in Russia.

Resistance of the Anarchists, however, was in places much farther-reaching, despite a swift and terrible repression. Having as its goal the realization of the other idea of the Revolution, and having taken everywhere, in the course of events, an important place, this struggle and its vicissitudes merit the reader's full attention.

We must add that, deliberately distorted and later suppressed by the Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and by-passed by subsequent events on the other, this epic has remained unknown (except in interested circles), not only by the public at large but even by those who have more or less studied the Russian Revolution. Despite its importance, it remains outside of their investigations and their documentation. Rarely in the course of human history has an idea been so disfigured and slandered as Anarchism has been.

Generally, too, they are not even concerned with Anarchism. They exclusively attack "Anarchists", considered by all governments as "No. 1 Public Enemies", and everywhere presented in an exceptionally unfavourable manner. In the best cases, they are accused of being madmen, "plain crazy", or "half-crazy". More often they are portrayed as "bandits", "criminals", senseless terrorists, indiscriminate bomb-throwers. To be sure, there have been, and are, terrorists among the Anarchists, as there are among the followers of other political and social organizations and tendencies. But, precisely because they regard the Anarchist idea as being too seductive and dangerous to tolerate the masses becoming interested in it and understanding it, the governments of all countries and of all shades

of opinion take advantage of certain acts of violence committed by Anarchist terrorists to compromise that idea itself, and they smear not only those terrorists but also all the militants, whatever their methods.

As for the Anarchist thinkers and theoreticians, they arc treated most frequently as “Utopians”, “irresponsible dreamers”, “abstract philosophers”, or “extravagants”, whose ideas are dangerously interpreted by their “followers”, and as “mystics”, whose ideas, even if they are beautiful, have nothing in common with real life, nor with men as they are. (It is claimed, on the bourgeois side, that the capitalist system is stable and “real”, and on the Socialist side, that the authoritarian Socialist idea is not Utopian — this in spite of the inextricable chaos and enormous social calamities, accumulated for centuries by the first, and in spite of the memorable bankruptcies “achieved” in a half century of application by the second).

Very often they simply seek to ridicule the [Anarchist] idea. po they not try to make the ignorant masses believe that Anarchism is a system “renouncing all society and all organization”, according to vvhich “everybody can do what he likes”? Do they not say to the public that anarchy is synonymous with disorder, and this in the face of the real and inconceivable chaos of all the non-Anarchist systems that have been tried up to now?

That policy towards Anarchism, due primarily to its integrity and the impossibility of taming it (a technique which has worked very well with Socialism), in view of its refraining from all “political” activity, bears its own fruits: a mistrust, even a fear and general hostility — or at least indifference, ignorance, and ingrained incomprehension — which spring up wherever it appears. This situation long rendered it isolated and impotent. But for some time, slowly, and owing to the force of events and propaganda, public opinion has evolved in relation to Anarchism and Anarchists. The deception is beginning to be recognized. Perhaps the day is not far off when the vast masses, having understood the Anarchist idea, will turn against the “deceivers” (I had almost written “hangmen”[12]) by taking an increased interest in the martyred idea and following a natural psychological reaction.

(Certain admissions and truths that the press was obliged to publish during the events in Spain [the civil war there], as well as certain other facts more or less well known already have produced a salutary effect and helped the libertarian idea to gain ground).

As for the Russian Revolution, the attitude of the Bolshevik government with regard to the Anarchists surpassed by far, in deception, slander, and

repression, that of all other former and present governments. The role that the libertarian concept played in the Revolution and the fate that it met there will eventually be widely known, despite the customary stifling. For a fairly long period, that role was considerable.

The revelations, which have been accumulating, bit by bit, not only throw a new light on past and current events but also a bright light on the course to be followed. And they permit one to foresee and better understand certain important phenomena which, beyond any doubt, will occur in the course of happenings in the near future.

For all these reasons the reader has the right — and even the duty — to understand the facts which will be disclosed here. What was the activity of the Anarchists in the Russian Revolution? What exactly was their role and their fate? *What was the real "weight" and what was the destiny of "this other idea of the Revolution"* represented and defended by the Anarchists? Our study will answer these questions at the same time as it gives indispensable details about the true role, the activity, and the system of Bolshevism. We hope that this presentation will help the reader to orient himself in relation to serious current and future events.

Despite their irreparable retardation and their extreme weakness, despite also all sorts of obstacles and difficulties, and finally, notwithstanding the sweeping and implacable repression of which they were the object, the Anarchists were able, here and there, and especially after October, 1917, to win lively and profound sympathy. Their ideas achieved prompt success in certain regions. And their numbers increased rapidly, despite the heavy sacrifices in men, which were inflicted on them by events.

In the course of the Revolution the activity of the Anarchists exercised a strong influence. It had marked effects in the first place, because they were the only ones who opposed *a new concept of the Social Revolution* to the thesis and action of the Bolshevists, more or less discredited in the eyes of the masses — and then, because they [the Anarchists] propagated and defended that concept, to the extent of their strength and despite inhuman persecution, with a disinterested and sublime devotion to the end, until a time when the overwhelming numbers, frenzied demagogy, knavery, and unprecedented violence of their adversaries forced them to succumb.

We should not be at all astonished by this [initial] success nor by its non-fulfilment. On the one hand, thanks to their integrated courageous, and self-sacrificing attitude, thanks also to their constant presence and action in the midst of the masses, and not in the "ministries" or bureaux; and thanks, finally, to the striking vitality of their ideas in the face of the practice of the Bolsheviki, which soon became questionable, the Anarchists found —

in every area where they could act — friends and adherents. (One has the right to suppose that if the Bolsheviks, fully aware of the danger that this success represented to them, had not put an end, immediately, to the activity and propaganda of the libertarians, the Revolution might have taken a different turn and led to different results).

But on the other hand, their retardation in relation to events, the greatly restricted number of their militants capable of carrying on an extensive oral and written propaganda in an immense country, the lack of preparation of the masses, the generally unfavourable conditions, the persecutions, and the considerable loss in men — all these circumstances limited drastically the extent and continuity of the Anarchists' work, and facilitated the repressive action by the Bolshevik regime.

Let us go on to the facts.

In Russia the Anarchists have always been the only ones who spread among the masses the idea of the true, popular, integral, emancipating Social Revolution.

The Revolution of 1905, with the exception of the Anarchist component, marched under such slogans as "democracy" (bourgeois), "Down with Tsarism!", "Long live the democratic Republic!". Bolshevism itself did not go farther at that time. Anarchism was then the only doctrine which went to the root of the problem and warned the masses of the danger of a political solution.

As weak as the libertarian forces were then, in comparison to the democratic parties, the [Anarchist] idea already had gathered around it a little group of workers and intellectuals who protested, here and there, against the snare of "democracy". True, their voices were sounding in the desert. But that did not discourage them. And soon a few sympathisers and a movement of sorts grew up around them.

The Revolution of 1917 grew and spread, in the beginning, like a flood. It was difficult to foresee its limits. Having overthrown absolutism, the people "made their entry into the arena of historical action".

In vain did the political parties try to stabilize their positions I and adapt themselves to the revolutionary movement. Steadily I the working people went forward against their enemies, leaving I behind them, one after another, the different parties with their I "programs". The Bolsheviks themselves — who formed the best I organized party, the most ardent and determined aspirant to power I — were obliged to alter their slogans repeatedly to be able to follow I the rapid development of events, and of

the masses. (Remember I their first slogans: *"Long live the Constituent Assembly!" and "Long live workers' control of production!"*

As in 1905 the Anarchists were, in 1917, the only defenders I of the true and integral Social Revolution. They held constantly to their course, despite their restricted numbers, their financial weakness, and their lack of organization.

During the summer of 1917 they supported, both by word and action, the agrarian movements of the peasants. They also stood with the workers when, long before the October *coup*, the latter took over industrial enterprises in various places and tried to organize production on a basis of autonomy and workers' collec- f tivity.

The Anarchists fought in the front ranks of the workers' and sailors' movement of Kronstadt and Petrograd on July 3, 4, and 5. In Petrograd they set an example by taking over the printing houses in order that workers' and revolutionary journals should appear.

When, in that summer, the Bolsheviki displayed towards the bourgeoisie a more audacious attitude than the other political parties, the Anarchists approved this, and considered it their revolutionary duty to combat the lies of bourgeois and Socialist governments which called Lenin and the other Bolsheviks "agents of the German government".

The Anarchists also fought in the advance guard in Petrograd, Moscow, and elsewhere, in October, 1917, against the Kerensky coalition government [the fourth provisional regime]. It of course goes without saying that they marched, not in the name of any other power, but exclusively in the name of the conquest by the masses of their right to construct, on truly new bases, their own economic and social life. For many reasons which the reader knows, that idea was not put into practice, but the Anarchists fought, and to the end, alone for this just cause.

If, in this regard, there are grounds for reproaching them, it is only because they did not take time to reach an agreement among themselves and did not present, to a satisfactory degree, the elements of a free organization among the masses. But we know that they had to take account of their small numbers, their exceedingly slow concentration, and especially, of the absence of all Syndicalist and libertarian education of the masses themselves. Time was needed to remedy this situation. But the Bolsheviks, deliberately and specifically, did not allow either the Anarchists or the masses the time in which to overcome these retardations.

In Petrograd, it was again the sailors from Kronstadt, who, coming to the

capital for the decisive struggle in October, played a particularly notable part. And among them were numerous Anarchists.

In Moscow, the most perilous and critical tasks during the hard fighting in October, fell upon the famous *Dvintsi* (the Dvinsk regiment). Under Kerensky, this whole regiment was imprisoned for refusal to take part in the offensive on the Austro-German front in June, 1917. It was always the *Dvintsi* who acted when it was necessary to dislodge the "Whites" (the *Kadets*, as they were known in that period) from the Kremlin, from the "Metropole", or from other sections of Moscow, and in the most dangerous places. When the *Kadets*, reinforced, resumed the offensive, it was always the *Dvintsi* who exerted themselves to the utmost to defeat them, during the ten days of struggle. All of [the *Dvintsi*] called themselves Anarchists, and marched under the command of two old libertarians, Gratchov and Fedotov.

The Anarchist Federation of Moscow, with a part of the Dvinsk regiment, marched first, in order of combat, against the forces of the Kerensky government. The workers of Presnia, of Sokolniki, of Zamoskvoretchia, and other districts of Moscow, went into battle with libertarian groups in the vanguard. Presnia's workers lost a fighter of great valor: Nikitin, an Anarchist worker, invariably in the front rank, was mortally wounded toward the end of the battle, in the center of the city. Several dozen other Anarchist workers also lost their lives in these struggles and lie in the common grave in Red Square in Moscow.

After the October Revolution, the Anarchists, despite the divergence of ideas and methods which separated them from the new "Communist" power, continued to serve the cause of the Revolution with the same perseverance and devotion. We should remember that they were the only ones who rejected the principle of the Constituent Assembly, and that when the latter became an obstacle to the Revolution, as they had foreseen and predicted, I they took the first step towards its dissolution. Subsequently they I fought with an energy and self-abnegation recognized even by their opponents, on all the fronts against the repeated offensives of reaction. In the defense of Petrograd against General Lavr G. Kornilov (August, 1917), in the fight against General Kaledin in the South (1918), and elsewhere, the Anarchists played a distin- a guished role.

Numerous detachments of partisans, large and small, formed by the Anarchists or led by them (the detachments of Mokrusov, Tcherniak, Maria Nikiforova, and others, without speaking for the moment of Makhno's partisan Army), and including in their ranks a great number of libertarians, fought in the South without j a rest from 1918 to 1920 against the reactionary armies. And isolated Anarchists were on all the fronts as simple

combatants, lost among the mass of worker and peasant insurgents.

In places, the Anarchist strength quickly grew. But Anarchism lost many of its best forces in that fearful fighting. This sublime sacrifice, which contributed powerfully to the final victory of the Revolution, materially weakened the libertarian movement in Russia, then scarcely formed. And unfortunately, its forces being employed on the various fronts against the counter-revolution, the rest of the country was deprived of them. Meanwhile Anarchist activity and propaganda suffered notably.

In 1919 especially, the counter-revolution led by General Denikin, and later by General Wrangel, made still greater inroads into libertarian ranks. For it was primarily the libertarians who contributed to the defeat of the "White" Army. The latter was put to flight not by the Red Army in the North, but rather in the South, in the Ukraine, by the insurgent peasant mass, whose principal force was the partisan Army called Makhnovist, which was strongly impregnated with libertarian ideas and led by the Anarchist, Nestor Makhno. And as for revolutionary organizations, the libertarian groups of the South were the only ones who fought •n the Makhnovist ranks against Denikin and Wrangel.

Here is a piquant detail: While in the South, the Anarchists, momentarily free to act, were heroically defending the Revolution, and paying with their lives, the "Soviet" government, really saved by this action, was furiously repressing the libertarian movement in the rest of the country. And as the reader will see, as soon as the danger in the South was ended, the repression also fell on the Anarchists in that region.

Likewise the Anarchists played a large part in the struggles against Admiral Alexander Kolchak in Eastern Russia and in Siberia, where they lost more militants and sympathizers.

Everywhere the partisan forces, including in their ranks a certain number of libertarians, did more of the job than the regular Red Army, and everywhere the Anarchists defended the fundamental principle of the Social Revolution: the independence and freedom of action of the workers on the march toward their true emancipation.

[12] The words in French are bourreurs and bourreaux — one of Voline's rare puns. — Translator's note.

Chapter 3. The Anarchist Organizations

Participation of the Anarchists in the Revolution was not confined to combatant activity. They also endeavored to spread among the working masses their ideas about the immediate and progressive construction of a non-authoritarian society, as an indispensable condition for achieving the desired result. To accomplish this task, they created their libertarian organizations, set forth their principles in full, put them into practice as much as possible, and published and circulated their periodicals and literature.

We shall mention some of the most active Anarchist organizations at that time:

1. The Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda, which bore the name of *Golos Truda*, meaning The Voice of Labor. It had as its object the dissemination of Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas among the workers. This activity was carried on at first in Petrograd from the summer of 1917 to the spring of 1918, and later, for some time, in Moscow. That organization's paper, also called *Golos Truda*, began as a weekly and subsequently became a daily. And the organization also founded an Anarcho-Syndicalist publishing house.

Immediately upon taking power, the Bolsheviks set about impeding, in all ways, this activity in general and the appearance of that journal in particular. And finally, in 1918–19 the "Communist" government Uquidated the Propaganda Union organization completely, and afterward the publishing house also. All the members were either imprisoned or exiled.

2. The Federation of Anarchist Groups of Moscow. — This was a relatively large organization, which in 1917–18 carried on intensive propaganda in Moscow and the provinces. It published a daily paper, *Anarchy*, of Anarcho-Communist tendencies, and it, too, established a libertarian publishing house. And it was sacked by the "Soviet" government in April, 1918, though some remains of that movement survived until 1921, when the last traces of the former Federation were "liquidated" and the last of its militants "suppressed".

3. The *Nabat* Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of the Ukraine.[13] — This important organization was created at the end of 1918 in Ukrainia, where at this time the Bolsheviks had not yet managed to impose their dictatorship. It distinguished itself everywhere by positive, concrete

activity, proclaimed the necessity for an immediate and direct struggle for non-authoritarian forms of social structure, and worked to elaborate the practical elements.

Playing a significant role with its agitation and extremely energetic propaganda, the Confederation aided greatly in the spreading of libertarian ideas in the Ukraine. Its principal paper was Nabat. It strove to create a unified Anarchist movement (based, theoretically, on a sort of Anarchist "synthesis") and to rally all the active Anarchist forces in Russia, *without regard for* [specific] *tendency*, into a general organization. And it did unify nearly all of the Anarchist groups in the Ukraine, incorporated some groups in Great Russia — and tried to found a Pan-Russian Anarchist Confederation.

Also, developing its activity in the central coal-mining region, the Confederation entered into close relations with the movement of revolutionary partisans, peasants, and city workers, and with the nucleus of this movement, the *Makhnovtchina*. It took active part in the fighting against all forms of reaction: against the *hetman* Skoropadsky,[14] against Petlura, Denikin, Grigoriev, Wrangel, and others. In these struggles it lost nearly all of its best militants.

Naturally it attracted the wrath of the "Communist" power, but under the conditions existing in the Ukraine it was able to resist repeated attacks [from that direction]. Its final and complete liquidation by the Bolshevik authorities took place at the end of 1920, several of its militants being shot without even the semblance of a trial.

Apart from these three organizations of fairly large scope and of more or less widespread activity, there existed others of lesser importance. Almost everywhere in Russia, in 1917 and 1918, there arose Anarchist groups, movements, and tendencies, generally of slight import and ephemeral, but in places quite active — some independent, others in co-operation with one of the three organizations cited above.

Despite some divergencies in principle and tactics, all these movements were in agreement on fundamentals, and performed, to the limit of their strength and opportunities, their duty to the Revolution and to Anarchism, and sowed among the laboring masses the seed of a really new social organization — anti-authoritarian and federalist.

All eventually met with the same fate: brutal suppression by the "Soviet" authority.

[13] *Nabat* in Russian means Tocsin, or Alarm.

[14] In past centuries *hetman* was the title of the elected leader of the independent Ukraine. Installed in power by the Germans, Skoropadsky appropriated this title.

Chapter 4. The Unknown Anarchist Press in the Russian Revolution

We have quoted earlier some editorials from Golos Truda, organ of the Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda, showing the attitude of that organization toward the taking of power by the Bolsheviki, the peace of Brest-Litovsk, and the Constituent Assembly.

It is proper to supplement these with other quotations, which will give the reader details of the various points of disagreement between the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists, and [will be enlightening] on the position of the latter concerning the problems of the Revolution, and finally, on the very spirit of the two conceptions.

The Anarchist press in Russia during the revolutionary period being practically unknown[15] outside of that country, some of these extracts will provide distinct revelations [for many who read them in the following pages].

Golos Truda appeared first on August 11, 1917, five and a half months after the outbreak of the Revolution, and therefore with a long and irreparable delay. Nevertheless the comrades energetically set to work. The task was hard, for the Bolshevik Party already had won over the great majority of the working masses. In comparison to its activity and influence, those of the Propaganda Union and its [new weekly] were of little importance. Slowly and with difficulty the work progressed. There was hardly any place for it in the factories of Petrograd. Everybody there followed the Bolshevik Party, read its papers, saw only its interpretations. No one paid attention to a wholly unknown organiza-tion, to “bizarre” ideas that didn’t resemble at all those which were spoken and discussed elsewhere.

However, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union quickly acquired a certain influence. Soon it began to be listened to. Its meetings rapidly succeeded in creating fairly strong groups in Petrograd itself and its suburbs — in Kronstadt, Oboukhovo, Kolpin, et cetera. The weekly was successful; its circulation kept increasing, even in the provinces, despite all obstacles.

Under the existing conditions, the principal task of the Union consisted of intensifying its propaganda, to make itself known, and to attract the attention of the laboring masses to its ideas and its attitude toward the other social tendencies. The burden of this task fell mainly on its periodical, oral propaganda then being greatly restricted because of lack of means.

Three periods can be discerned in this organization's very short life: 1. Before the October Revolution; 2. During this second revolution; 3. After it.

In the first period, the Union fought simultaneously against the government of the moment (Kerensky's) and against the danger of a political revolution (toward which everything seemed to converge), and for a new social organization on a Syndicalist and libertarian basis. Each number of *Golos Truda* contained clear and definite articles on the way in which the Anarcho-Syndicalists conceived the constructive tasks of the Revolution to come. Such, for example, were a series of articles on the role of the factory committees; articles on the tasks of the Soviets, and others on how to resolve the agrarian problem, on the new organization of production, and on exchange.

In several articles — and especially in its editorials — the paper explained to the workers in a concrete manner, what the real emancipating Revolution ought to be, according to the Anarcho-Syndicalists.

Thus, in an editorial entitled "The impasses of the Revolution", in its initial issue,[16] *Golos Truda*, after reviewing the development of that revolt and analyzing the crisis through which it passed in August, 1917, declared that it conceived future revolutionary action in a way which did not at all resemble that of the Socialist writers. The organization for which it spoke, it said, was strongly opposed to the "programs" and "tactics" of the various parties and factions: Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, left Social Revolutionaries, right Social Revolutionaries, *et al.*

> If it had been possible [the editors declared] for us to have raised our voice earlier, at the very beginning of the Revolution, in the first days and weeks of its free start, of its magnificent unfolding, and its ardent, unlimited aspirations, we would have immediately, from those first moments, proposed and defended methods and actions absolutely different from those preconceived by the Socialist parties. We are strongly opposed to the "programs" and "tactics" of all these parties and factions: Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, left Social Revolutionaries, right Social Revolutionaries, et cetera. We would have pointed out other goals for the Revolution. And we would have suggested other tasks for the toiling masses.
>
> The long years of our work abroad were consecrated to propaganda for an entirely different array of ideas on the Social Revolution and its course. Alas, our thought did not penetrate into Russia, separated from other countries

> by a police barrier. Today our forces are rallying here. And we consider it our first duty, our most sacred task, to take up this work immediately in our own land — at present the land of freedom ... We must open new horizons for the laboring masses, must help them in their quest.

Golos Truda saw the Revolution then as temporarily blocked in an impasse, while the Russian masses were at rest, as if plunged in awkward reflection. And there must be action, it contended, so that this reflection would not remain sterile. The halt must be realized in such a way that the new revolutionary wave would find the masses further prepared, more conscious of the goals to be attained, the tasks to be performed, the course to follow. Everything humanly possible must be done so that the coming wave would not dissipate itself again in a start without results.

"From this moment," the editors averred, "we will point out the means of getting out of this impasse — means of which the whole periodical press, without exception, does not say a single word."

In its second issue,[17] the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ asked a timely question:

"We are living in a critical period. The scales of the Revolution are in motion — now slowly, now convulsively. They will continue this movement for some time. Then they will stop. Will the Russian workers know, in opportune time, while their scales are still oscillating, how to throw on their tray a new idea, a new principle of organization, a new social basis? It is on this that much — if not all — of the destiny and result of the Revolution depend."

Confidence in the ability of the country's masses to carry on effectively was voiced in an editorial headed "Questions of the Hour", in the third issue[18] of *Golos Truda*:

> We say to the Russian workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionists: Above all, continue the Revolution. Continue to organize yourselves solidly and to unite your new organizations: your communes, your unions, your committees, your Soviets. Continue — with firmness and perseverence, always and everywhere — to participate more and more extensively and more and more effectively, in the economic activity of the country. Continue to take into your hands, that is, into the hands of your organizations, all the raw materials and all the

> instruments indispensable to your labor. Continue to eliminate private enterprises.
>
> Continue the Revolution! Do not*hesitate to face the solution of all the burning questions of the present. Create everywhere the necessary organizations to achieve those solutions. Peasants, take the land and put it at the disposal of your committees. Workers, proceed to put in the hands of and at the disposal of your own social organizations — everywhere on the spot — the mines and the subsoil, the enterprises and establishments of airports, the works and factories, the workshops, and the machines.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik Patty oriented itself more and more toward it *coup d'etat*. It was fully aware of the revolutionary state of mind of the masses, and hoped to take advantage of it — that is, to take power.

Criticizing that orientation, the editors of the Anarcho-Syndi-calist periodical commented further on the situation in its third issue. They said that a logical, clear, and simple solution was offered to those for whom they spoke, a solution which arose of itself, and which they had only to utilize, resolutely, boldly.

> It is necessary [*Golos Truda* held] to decide and to pronounce the last word suggested by the very logic of events: *We have no need of power*. In the place of "power" there are the unified organizations of the toilers — workers and peasants — which should became "the masters of life". Supported by the revolutionary formations of soldiers, these organizations should not help someone to "take power" but take directly into their own hands the land and other elements and instruments of labor, establishing everywhere, on the spot, a new social and economic order.

The simple "natives" and the "cowards" would peacefully accept the new situation, the editors continued. The bourgeoisie — remaining without soldiers and without capital — naturally would remain without power. And the organizations of the workers, joined together, would put on solid feet, by common agreement, production, transport, and communications, exchange and the distribution of merchandise — all on new bases, creating for this purpose, in line with actual necessity, the indispensable organizations of co-ordination and centers. Then — and only then — would the Revolution have conquered.

Moreover, *Golos Truda* maintained, while the struggle had the character of a quarrel between the political parties for power, and the laboring masses were dragged into these quarrels and divided by political fetishes, there could be no question either of the victory of the Revolution nor even of a really serious social reconstruction of life. And hope was expressed that the masses, driven by the very exigencies of life, would end by arriving at this solution, the elements of which were already sowed by the objective conditions of the time and the whole existing situation.

"It goes without saying," the editors concluded, "that we do not intend to be prophets. We only foresee a certain *possibility*, a certain *tendency* which *may not develop*. But, in the latter case, the present Revolution will not be the true Great Social Revolution. And then, the solution of the problem — which we have just sketched out — will fall to one of the future revolutions."

Finally, on the eve of the October Revolution, an editorial in *Golos Truda* said:

> Either the Revolution will follow its course, and the masses — after tests, misfortunes, and horrors of all sorts, after errors, delays, collisions, recoveries, new retreats, perhaps even a civil war and a temporary dictatorship, — will finally *learn* to raise their consciousness to a level that will enable them to apply their creative forces to a positive activity of their own autonomous organizations, everywhere, on the spot. Then the safety and the victory of the Revolution will be assured.
>
> Or. the masses will *not yet learn* to create in the cause of the Revolution their organizations co-ordinated and consecrated to the building of the new life. Then the Revolution will sooner or later be extinguished. For only these organizations are capable of leading it to complete victory.

The attitude of the Union for Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda *at the very moment of the October coup d'etat* has been sufficiently described in an earlier chapter. Let us recall only that, having expressed their reservations, the Anarchists participated aggressively in that revolution — wherever it resulted in action by the masses (as in Kronstadt and Moscow) for reasons and for goals specified in the reservations themselves.

After the October Revolution, during the few months of its difficult

existence, and though increasingly circumscribed by the Bolshevik government,[19] the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union followed from day to day the action of the latter and the march of events. *Golos Truda*, which appeared daily for three months, explained to the workers all the mistakes, all the misdeeds of the new power, *developing, at the same time, its own ideas and indicating the way to apply them*, in conformity with its point of view. Such a procedure was not only its right, but incontestably its strictest duty.

In a series of articles[20] the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ insisted on the necessity of immediate abandonment of *the political methods of the dictatorship over the masses* and allowing the working people freedom of organization and action.

> 1. From the beginning of the Revolution — from the month of March — [that publication commented] the laboring masses should have created everywhere their workers' organizations, class organizations, outside of parties, co-ordinating the action of those organizations and concentrating all of it on the only real goal to be attained: expropriation of all elements indispensable to labor and, finally, to the nation's economic life.
>
> 2. The educated, conscious, experienced men, the intellectuals, the specialists, should have, from the first days of the Revolution, preoccupied themselves not with political struggles and slogans, *not with the "organization of power", but with that of the Revolution.* All these men should have helped the masses in the development and perfecting of their organizations, helped them to employ their vigilance, energy, and activities for the preparation of *a real Revolution*, both economic and social. No one, at that moment, would have impeded them in this task.

In fact, *Golos Truda* argued, the peasants and the soldiers were in perfect agreement about this collective duty — and the real Revolution would have advanced rapidly, *by the correct route*. It would, from the beginning, the editors declared, have sent its roots down deep, all the more in that the masses themselves, in a spontaneous drive, already had created a network of organizations, and it was only a question of giving this constructive task a certain amount of order and a higher consciousness. If, from the start, the Anarcho-Syndicalist audience was told, all the sincere revolutionists and the whole Socialist press had concentrated their attention, their strength, and their energy on that task, the course of the Revolution would have been different — but that was precisely what had not been done.

Where Power begins, the Revolution ends, another article in the same periodical pointed out.[21] When the "organization of power" began, it asserted, the "organization of the Revolution" ended — for the expression "revolutionary power" had as much sense as "warm ice" or "cold fire", meaning none at all.

If the Revolution is definitively put on the political road, in line with the recipe for "the organization of power", [that article continued], we will see what happens: As soon as the first revolutionary victory of the insurgent people (a victory so dearly won, precisely by reason of the same political methods) becomes an established fact, our "second Revolution" will stop. In place of the free and creative revolutionary activity of the masses every, where on the spot — an activity indispensable for the consolidation and development of this victory — we shall witness a disgusting "trafficking" around the power at the center, and, finally, an absurd "activity" of the new central "power" — of a new "government of all the Russias".

The Soviets and the other local organizations will of course be subordinated to the central Soviet and the Government. They will become in fact the authority of the leaders of the [Bolshevik] Party, installed in the center. And in place of a natural and independent union of free cities and a countryside constructing the new economic and social life on their own, we shall see "a strong State center", and "a firm revolutionary power" which will prescribe, order, impose, chastise.

Nothing between those two possibilities was capable of being achieved, *Golos Truda* avowed — either it would be like that or the authority would not exist. For (one read) phrases about "local autonomy" in the presence of a vigorous State power had always been, were then, and would be in the future, empty phrases.

But the workers were warned by the Anarcho-Syndicalist spokesmen that if they expected to get from the new power the Social Revolution, Socialism, abolition of the capitalist system, and their own real emancipation, they would be sorely disappointed — because neither that power nor any other knew how to give all those [advantages] to the laboring masses. Then certain facts were set forth to prove that the Bolsheviki finally would end by degenerating and betraying the Russian people.

This meant, it was pointed out, that from Bolshevism to capitalism the front [facing the working masses] was one continuous, unbroken barrier, a result of the inevitable laws of political struggle.

> You will say to us [the editors went on] that you will protest, that you will struggle for your rights, that you

> will rise up and act everywhere on the spot in full independence. Very well. But be prepared for your activities to be called “arbitrary” and “anarchic”; for the “Socialists in power” to assail you under this pretext, with all the strength of their “Socialist” authority; and, finally, for opposition from the classes of the population that are satisfied with the new government (classes to which it has given something), as well aS all those who have had enough of the Revolution and who only feel anger and hatred toward you.
>
> In your struggle against Tsarism you had nearly the whole country with you. But in your struggle against Kerensky you already were more isolated.
>
> If now you let the new power consolidate itself (and if events permit it), and if subsequently you have to combat this power, once it has become strong, you will not be more than a handful. They will wipe you out pitilessly as “madmen”, as “dangerous fanatics”, as “bandits” ... And they will not even put a stone on your graves.

On the eve of the seizure of the Government by the Bolsheviks, *Golos Truda* dealt with the situation under the title, *From Impasse to Impasse*.[22] Therein it held that the only way to put the Revolution on the correct and proper course would be to renounce the consolidation of central political power.

“All power is a danger to the Revolution,” that editorial set forth. “No power can lead the Revolution to its real goal. Nowhere in the labyrinths of political contrivance can be found the key which will open the promised door of the Temple of Victory.”

> Help the masses at once, everywhere on the spot, to create their own class organizations outside the parties [so the Anarcho-Syndicalist journal admonished its readers]. Help those organizations to form a harmonious whole, first locally, then regionally, et cetera, by means of Soviets representing such organizations: not authoritarian Soviets, but simply instruments of contact and coordination. Orient these organizations toward the only important goal — that of their progressively taking over production, exchange, communication, distribution, et cetera. Begin thus, immediately, to organize the social and economic life of the country on new bases. Then a

> sort of “dictatorship of labor” will begin to be achieved, easily and in a natural manner. And the [people generally] will learn, little by little, to do it....

Socialist and Anarchist methods of action were compared by *Golos Truda* in comment headed *The Organization of the Revolution*.[23]

The Socialist parties were represented as saying: “To organize the Revolution it is necessary, before anything else, *to take power in the State* and organize this new power. With the help of it, the [nation’s] whole economy also will pass into the hands of the State.”

But, in contrast, the Anarchist position was indicated thus: “To organize the Revolution, it is necessary, before anything else, *to take over the economy* and organize it. By this means, Power and the State (recognized by the Socialists themselves as an ‘inevitable’ temporary evil) will be eliminated.”

To take over the economy (the expansion of Anarchist procedure continued) meant taking possession of agriculture, industry, and exchange. Also it meant having control of all the means and instruments of production, labor, and transportation, the soil and sub-soil, the mines, factories, works, workshops; the stocks and the depots; the stores, the banks; the railways, the stations; the maritime and river transports; and all means of communication — the postal, telegraph, and telephone systems.

> To take power [*Golos Truda* averred] a political party is needed. For, in fact, it is a party which takes possession of power, in the persons of its leaders. That is why the Socialists incite the masses to organize into a party in order to support them at the moment of struggle for the seizure of power.
>
> To take over *the economy* a political party is not indispensable. But indispensable to that action are the organizations of the masses, independent organizations remaining outside of all political parties. It is upon these organizations that falls, at the moment of the Revolution, the task of building the new social and economic system.
>
> That is why the Anarchists do not form a political party. They agitate, either directly in the mass organizations or — as propagandists — in groups and ideological unions.

Concluding, the Anarcho-Syndicalist paper posed these fundamental

questions: “How must one, how can one organize without power? By what rules must one begin? How must one proceed?”

It promised to answer the three queries in a precise and detailed way. And in fact it answered them in several articles which appeared before the periodical’s suppression in the spring of 1918.[24]

The latter part of 1917 was exceedingly hard for the Russian people, for the war continued to exhaust and paralyze the country. More and more tragic did the situation in the interior become.

Golos Truda dealt with the far-flung and grim national scene under the title *What Must Be Done?* saying:

> The conditions of existence of the working masses grow worse from day to day. Poverty increases. Hunger is a permanent guest. Cold is there, but the problems of rent and heating are not solved. A very large number of factories are closing their doors for lack of means, fuel, and raw materials, and frequently the owners are in flight. Russia’s railroads are in a lamentable state, and the economy of the country is totally ruined...

A paradoxical situation is created.

At the top is the “workers and peasants’” government, the center invested with all power and possessing the strength to exercise it. The masses wait for solutions from [that regime]. It issues decrees, in which it says very well what the improvements should be, (and what it preconceives is well below the needs of the masses), but to the essential question, *how to achieve them*, it replies: “The Constituent Assembly!”

At the bottom everything remains as before. The masses groan with hunger — but the speculation, gain, and disgusting commerce “under the table” continues in fine shape. The masses are impoverished — but the shops (even the display windows) are filled with garments, meat, vegetables, fruits, and jams ... And do not doubt that in the city there are a goodly number of objects of prime necessity.

The masses are poor — but the banks are rich. The masses are thrown into the streets, factories close their doors, and it is impossible to “take in hand” the abandoned enterprises, because of lack of capital, fuel, and raw materials.

The countryside needs the products of the city. The city needs the products of the countryside — but the situation is such that it is almost impossible

to effect the exchange.

Criticizing the weak behavior of the Bolshevik government in the face of this disastrous condition, the Anarcho-Syndicalist organ proposed certain means which seemed to it to be the quickest, simplest, and most effective way of meeting the pressing first problem of the nation.

In several articles (*What Must be Done?, Warning*, and others) the editors of *Golos Truda* submitted for consideration by Russia's workers a concrete and detailed program of urgent measures. [This impressive program well deserves tabular listing here. It follows].

1. Requisition by the workers' organizations of products of primary necessity and organization of stock piles and depots of distribution — to ward off famine;

2. Creation of people's restaurants;

3. Methodical organization of house committees (of tenants), street committees, and district committees, to cope with the insufficiency of lodgings, and at the same time to begin to replace landlords by collectives comprised of occupants — in other words, immediate and progressive socialization of dwelling places;

4. Immediate and progressive requisition by workers' organizations of enterprises abandoned by their owners;

5. Immediate organization of public works, to undertake urgently needed repair work in the cities, on the railroads, and elsewhere;

6. Immediate confiscation of a part of the funds in the banks, to permit the development of the new collective production;

7. Resumption of regular relations between the cities and the countryside;

8. Exchange of products between the workers' organizations and the farmers.

9. Socialization of the railroads and all the means of communication;

10. Requisition and socialization of the mines as rapidly as possible to enable the immediate supplying (through the workers' organizations) of factories, railroads, dwelling houses, et cetera, with raw materials [and fuel].

The Bolshevik government was far from envisaging such measures, for they would have tended, necessarily, to diminish its role, relegate it to a position of secondary importance, speedily demonstrate its uselessness and finally go beyond it. It could not allow this.

Not wanting to trust the masses with anything, but not feeling itself strong enough yet to attempt anything decisive through political action, that regime let things drag along, confining itself meanwhile to timid and ineffectual economic remedies. Especially did it seek to provide for the most pressing necessities by political police and military procedures: disorderly requisitions, arbitrary and brutal, with the help of detachments of troops stirred up by the leaders (procedures which, among other consequences, had the effect of turning the countryside against the cities and destroying all its interest in the Revolution), repressions, violence, etcetera.

While protesting vehemently against the false course on which the Bolsheviks, according to the Anarchists, were putting the Revolution, and criticizing their system, the Anarchists were the only ones to advocate truly popular, truly Socialist, and at the same time, concrete measures, which would, they declared, orient the Revolution immediately toward the road of the real Social Revolution.

The Bolsheviks naturally paid no attention to them. And the masses, manipulated and subjugated by Bolshevism, could neither hear the anarchists nor take a stand on their own.

In this context, I will cite a complete article from *Golos Truda* (No. 18, February 13, 1918) devoted to a Bolshevik governmental decree curbing the freedom of the press. The article clearly delineates the position of the two opposed ideologies with reference to a concrete problem.

False Route

> If one wants to note, from day to day, the facts and events proving incontestably that it is not possible to achieve the true Social Revolution “from above,” one could fill dozens of newspaper columns with them ... But we have other fish to fry at the moment, and we leave this task to the patient future historians of our Revolution. Without doubt they will discover in its archives abundant documentation demonstrating eloquently “how not to wage a revolution.”
>
> As for us, we have really had enough of repeating every

day, that neither true freedom nor true emancipation of the world of labor, nor ‘he true society, nor the new culture — in short, that *no real Socialist value* can be achieved by means of a centralized “State apparatus” actuated by political power in the hands of a party. Is it not time to have done with this subject, in the hope that, tomorrow, life itself will make this truth (basically so simple) known with perfect clarity, to all the blind?

However, they are so numerous, these blind men.

Only a few days ago we had in our hands a resolution saying the following: While the Anarchist idea is the best, the most glorious, and the purest of ideas, the moment for its realization has not yet come. It is indispensable first to consolidate the (“Socialist”) revolution that has been accomplished. “We are convinced,” the resolution concluded, “that Anarchism will come and triumph *after Socialism*.”

Such is the current banal conception of Anarchism!

To the good “citizen” Anarchism is either the bomb and pillage, horror and chaos, or else, in the best case, a beautifuldream, the paradise “after Socialism.” For the good “citizen” does not understand Anarchism. He judges it on the basis of rumor. He is so naive, so credulous, the poor thing.

And the authors of the resolution don’t understand it any better.

If one represents Anarchism as the attainment of an epoch in which one will live in a land of Cockaigne, then yes, its time has not yet come (and in this sense also, the time for “Socialism” has not yet arrived).

But if (as the authors of that resolution did) one looks on the problem from the point of view of the *road* toward emancipation, of the very process of the struggle for freedom, then it is absurd to imagine that in taking this road we follow another. Then one has to choose either one or another way.

Anarchism is not only an idea, a goal; it is, before anything

else, *also* a method, *a means of struggling for the emancipation of man. And*, from this point of view, we maintain clearly, categorically, that the "Socialist" way (that of authoritarian and statist Socialism) cannot achieve the goals of the Social Revolution, cannot lead us to Socialism. Only the Anarchist method is capable of solving that problem.

The essential thesis of Anarchism as a method of struggle, as a way toward true Socialism, is just this: It is impossible to get to Anarchism and to freedom in general "through Socialism" or "after Socialism." It is not "through" Socialism that we may reach it. *One cannot achieve Anarchism in any way except by going straight to the goal, by the direct Anarchist road.* Otherwise one never will arrive.

It is impossible to achieve freedom by means of State Socialism.

Being supporters of the conquest of Socialism by means of a revolution from above, the "Socialists," in our opinion, have gone astray; they are on a false route. Either they will be forced to turn around and regain the correct route-just, straight, Anarchist — or they will become involved and involve the whole Revolution in an *impasse*.

That is what Anarchism maintains. That is why it struggles against "Socialism" today. And that is what life is going to show the blind men presently...

We will not mention here all the various facts which have already reinforced our conviction. But we consider it necessary to concentrate on a single, striking fact.

We have just received a copy of the "*Provisional rules concerning (fie manner of editing all printed matter, periodical or not, in Petrograd*. "

We have always considered the implacable struggle against the bourgeois press the immediate task of the workers in time of social revolution.

Suppose then for an instant, dear reader, that this

Revolution had followed, from its beginning, our Anarchist course; that the workers' and peasants' organizations had grown up and federated themselves into a class organization; that they had taken into their own hands the economic life of the country; and that they had fought, and in their own way, the opposing forces. You will easily understand that the press, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie, would have been fought by these organizations in an essentially different manner from that employed by our "Socialist" government in combating the "bourgeois" press.

In fact, is it the bourgeois press with which these "Provisional Rules" are concerned?

Read Articles 2 to 8 of these "rules" attentively. Read especially the paragraph entitled "*Prohibition and Confiscation*." You will have tangible proof that, from the first to the last article, these "rules" suppress, *not* the bourgeois press, *but all vestiges of freedom of the press in general*. You will see that it is a typical act, establishing *the most rigorous censorship for all publications which have the misfortune of displeasing the Government*, whatever their nature. You will discern that this act sets up a multitude of formalities and impediments that are absolutely useless.

We are convinced that the real Revolution of the workers would fight the bourgeois press with other methods. We are convinced that the true militants and men of action of the real Social Revolution would never have recourse to *a censorship law*: a banal, typically bureaucratic and authoritarian law; a law seeking to protect the existing government against all kinds of criticism or opposition, *whether it comes from the right or the left*; a law, finally, which introduces a whole series of superfluous and barbaric brakes, impediments, and obstacles from the point of view of freedom of expression.

We've said more than once that every path has its peculiarities. Glory to the gods! the "peculiarity" in question only affects Petro-grad so far. We hope that the revolutionary masses of the rest of the country are more awake than our decadent capital, and that they render futile the application of these "Provisional Rules" in the

> provinces.
>
> We also hope that these provisional “rules” don’t become definitive.

The Anarchists supposed that, the printing houses and all the means of application having been taken directly into the hands of the workers’ organizations, the latter would refuse — which would have been simple and healthy — to print and publish counterrevolutionary writings. Thus, as in other fields, no political (gov-ermental, police, et cetera) action would be felt necessary and no censorship would develop.

It [seems almost] unnecessary to state that the “rules” in question were speedily extended to the whole country, and later served as the basis for laws dealing with the press which completely suppressed *all non-governmental* (non-Bolshevik) *publications*.

In the article headed *The Immediate Tasks*, the Anarcho-Syndicalist periodical offered detailed suggestions on the matter of solving various current problems. Its essential chapters included: *Organization of Rationing, How to Resolve the Housing Question, Factories and Works, The Banks, The City and the Country, Raw Materials and Fuel, Transportation*, and *Public Works*.

Naturally several articles were devoted to the peasant problem[25] by Golos Truda, as well as numerous editorials concerning the workers’ problem.[26]

To conclude these examples of published comment let me, as a curiosity, quote from an article in the same organ entitled *Lenin and Anarchism*.[27] Thus:

> The “Socialists”, swollen with sentiments of order, prudence, and circumspection, reproach Citizen Lenin constantly for his leanings towards Anarchism.
>
> The replies of Citizen Lenin reduce themselves, every time, to the same formula: “Be patient. I am not yet *altogether anarchistic*.”
>
> The Anarchists attack Citizen Lenin because of his weakness for Marxist dogma. The replies of Citizen Lenin reduce themselves, every time, to the same formula: “Be patient, I am no longer *altogether a Marxist*.”
>
> We wish to say, finally, to all those who may be

> disturbed in their minds about this: Do not be disturbed. Don't expect anything. *Citizen Lenin is not at all an Anarchist.*

And after a short analysis of Lenin's position in relation to the Revolution, the article goes on to state that he is right when he says: "We reject parliamentarianism, the Constituent Assembly, et cetera, because the Revolution has given rise to the Soviets." Yes, *Golos Truda* agrees, the Revolution gave rise, not only to the Soviets, but in general to a just and healthy tendency toward a class organization, outside of parties, a-political, non-statist — and the welfare of the Revolution is wholly bound up with this tendency.

> Citizen Lenin would be right [the Anarcho-Syndicalist journal continues] if he had recognized a long time ago, in the dawn of his youth, that the true Revolution should take precisely this course. But alas, at that time, he was a "pure Marxist".
>
> And now? Oh, of course, the tendencies, more and more consciously Anarchist, of the masses, bother him. Already the attitude of the masses has forced Citizen Lenin to turn back to the old road. He is in the process of yielding, of bending. He was only going to keep "the State", "authority", "the dictatorship", for an hour, for a little minute, for "the transitional moment". And afterward? Afterward, there would be Anarchism, almost-Anarchism, "Soviet Anarchism", "Leninist Anarchism".
>
> And the Marxists, filled with the spirit of method, wisdom, and mistrust, exclaimed in horror: "You see? You hear? You understand? It's terrible. Is this Marxism? Is this Socialism?"
>
> But, great gods! Coudn't you foresee, Citizen Socialists, what Citizen Lenin would say when his power was consolidated and it became possible for him no longer to have to pay attention to the voice of the masses?
>
> He then returned to his usual beaten path. He created a "Marxist State" of the most authentic kind. And at the solemn hour of complete victory, he will say to you: "You see, gentlemen, I am again a complete Marxist."

> There remains a single question, the principal one: Will not the masses become, before that happy hour, “entirely Anarchist”, and prevent Citizen Lenin from returning to complete Marxism?

I regret that I am unable to quote here several other texts from *Golos Truda*, from *Anarchy* (of Moscow), and from *Nabat* (of the Ukraine). For I do not have the necessary copies at hand, and under the conditions existing at this writing I cannot procure them. I can assure you, however, that, except for a few details and shades, the contents of all the serious libertarian periodicals in Russia in that period were [substantially] the same. And what has been quoted in the foregoing pages should suffice to give the reader a clear idea of the theses, the position, and the activity of the Anarchists [in Russia] during the Revolution.

It is fitting to add that the Anarchist Confederation of the Ukraine (*Nabat*), later suppressed by the Bolshevik power, organized, at Kursk and at Elizabethgrad, in November, 1918, and April, 1919, respectively, two congresses which accomplished considerable constructive work. They drew up a plan for libertarian action for the whole Ukraine, and their resolutions offered studious solutions for various burning problems of the hour.

The period between October, 1917, and the end of 1918 was significant and decisive. *It was in the course of those months that the fate of the Revolution was decided.* For a certain time, it oscillated between the two ideas and the two courses. A few months afterward, the die was cast — and the Bolshevik regime succeeded in establishing definitely its military, police, bureaucratic, and capitalist (new model) State.

The libertarian idea, which more and more ran counter to it, was stifled.

And as for the vast laboring masses, they had neither enough strength nor enough consciousness to be able to say the decisive word.

[15] Voline’s text in French reads “totally unknown outside of Russia”. The word *totally* has been changed to *practically* above because some copies of Russian Anarchist publications *did* reach Russian 6migr£s in the United States in that period, having been smuggled in by emissaries of the underground. Particularly, specimens of such literature found their way to the headquarters of the Union of Russian Workers in New York City.

[16] August 11, 1917.

[17] *Golos Truda*, August 18, 1917.

[18] August 25, 1917.

[19] To give an idea of the way in which the Government acted during these few months let us cite certain of its practices. Master of electric current, it cut off, nearly every morning around 3 o'clock, the line that fed the Union's printing shop. The current returned around 5 or 6 o'clock (or did not return at all). Thus the paper could not appear until 9 or 10 o'clock, when all employed persons being at work, no one could buy it. Also, the newsboys were jostled, chased, and sometimes arrested on false pretexts. At the Post Office up to 50 per cent, of the copies of *Golos Truda* were deliberately "lost". In short, it was necessary to struggle constantly against sabotage by the Bolshevik authorities.

[20] Those articles in *Golos Truda* were: *And Afterward?*, October 27, 1917; *The Second Revolution*, November 3/16; and *The Declaration and Life*, November 4/17.

[21] *The New Power*, in *Golos Truda*, November 4/17, 1917.

[22] No. 15, November 6/19, 1917.

[23] No. 16, November 7/20, 1917.

[24] *Golos Truda*, No. 19, November 18/December 1, 1917. Other notable articles or editorials in that publication which deserve mention here are *The War, The Famine*, and *The Last Stage*, in No. 17, November 8/21, 1917; *Warning*, in No. 20, and *The Immediate Tasks*, in No 21.

[25] *The Peasant Job*, in No. 22, and others.

[26] *The Workers' Course*, in No. 7 of the daily *Golos Truda*; *The Workers' Task*, in No. 11; *The Workers' Congress* (no date nor serial number given), and others.

[27] *Golos Truda*, No. 5, December 19, 1917/January 1, 1918.

Chapter 5. Some Personal Experiences

Certain personal experiences, chosen from among thousands like them, will serve as illustrations to make the particular nature of this period in Russia more understandable.

One evening near the end of 1917, in Petrograd, two or three workers from the former Nobel oil refinery (it had employed about 4,000) came to the meeting place of our Union and told us the following:

The refinery having been abandoned by the owners, the workers there decided, after numerous meetings and discussions, to operate it collectively. They had begun to take steps toward this end, and, among other moves, had addressed themselves to “their government” (the Bolshevist regime), asking for aid in the realization of that project.

But the Commissariat of the People at Work informed them that unfortunately it could do nothing for them under the prevailing conditions. It could get them neither fuel nor raw material nor orders nor clientele, nor means of transport, nor money for operating expenses.

So the workers prepared to get the plant going again through their own efforts, hoping to find what they needed to continue production and insure an adequate market.

Now the workers’ committee at the refinery had been advised by the Commissariat of Work that inasmuch as its case was isolated and since a large number of enterprises were in an analogous position, the Government had decided to close all these establishments and to lay off the workers, giving them two or three months’ wages, and to wait for better times.

However, the workers of the Nobel refinery did not agree with the Government. They wanted to continue work and production, being certain now of success. They told the Government so. The Bolshevik regime answered with a categorical refusal, declaring that as director of the whole country and responsible to that whole, it could not allow each plant to act according to whim, for this would end in inextricable chaos; that, as a government, it was obliged to take general action; and that, so far as operations in the Nobel plant were concerned, the action could be only to terminate them.

Called together by the plant committee in a general assembly, the workers objected to this decision. Then the Government proposed a new general meeting, where its representatives could come and definitively explain the

true sense of the ruling and the necessity for its application.

The workers accepted that proposal. And it was thus that some of them who had relations with our Union came to tell us about the situation, and to ask that we send a speaker to the meeting to expound the point of view of the Anarchists — for at that time this was still possible. The men at the plant, they said, surely would be glad to hear our opinion, so as to be able to compare the two theses, choose the better one, and act accordingly.

I was chosen as the delegate to that gathering, and was the first of those from outside to arrive. In a huge room the majority of the plant's workers were assembled. On an improvised platform in the center their committee sat around a table awaiting the appearance of the members of the Government. The attitude of the mass of toilers was grave, reserved. I took a place on the platform.

Soon the representatives of the Government arrived very "officially" and very solemnly, with shining brief cases under their arms. There were three or four of them, Mikhail Shlyapnikov himself, Commissar of the People at Work, as their leader.

He spoke first. In a dry official tone he repeated the terms of the Government's decision and expatiated the motives which led to it. He ended by declaring that that decision was positive, irrevocable, without appeal, and that, if they opposed it, the workers would commit a breach of discipline, the consequences of which would be serious both for themselves and for the whole country. A glacial silence greeted this speech, except for some applause clearly Bolshevist.

Then the chairman announced that certain workers in the Nobel plant wished also to know the point of view of the Anarchist on the question at issue, and that, inasmuch as a spokesman for the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union was present, he would give him the floor.

I got up. The members of the Government, stupified, (obviously they had not expected this), looked at me with unconcealed curiosity, mixed with irony, unease, and spite. What happened then has remained faithfully engraved in my memory, it was so typical, instructive, and encouraging to my convictions.

Addressing the big audience of workers, I said to them in substance as follows:

"Comrades, you have been working for years in this plant. You wish to continue your free work here. You have a perfect right to do this. It is

perhaps even your duty. In any case, the manifest duty of the Government — which calls itself yours — is to facilitate this task, to sustain you in your resolution. But the Government has just repeated to you that it is impotent to do it, and therefore it is going to close the plant and lay you off; this in spite of your decision and your interests. I declare before everything that from our point of view — I speak in the name of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union — the impotence of the Government (which calls itself yours) is not a reason to deprive you of your bit of bread honestly earned."

A salvo of applause greeted me.

"On the contrary," I continued, "those men, whether they call themselves members of the Government or anything else, ought to have congratulated you on your initiative, encouraged you, and said to you as we say to you: 'Seeing the impotence of the authorities, you have only one recourse, and that is to manage for yourselves and fight your way out by your own strength and means'. Your Government should add that, as such, it will do all within its power to assist you.

"As for me, I am not a member of the Government, nor do 1 wish to be — for no government, you see, is capable of doing what is necessary for you, nor of organizing human life in general. So I shall add another thing. I ask you one question: Have you the strength and the means to try to continue the work? Do you think you can succeed? Could you, for example, create among your ranks small, active, mobile working units, some of which would occupy themselves with getting fuel, some with finding raw material, others with the question of delivery by railroad, and still others with clientele and orders?

"Everything, comrades, depends upon such action. If you can create what is necessary, if you think you can succeed, you have only to go to it, and the Government ('your Government') certainly ought not to find anything inconvenient in all this. On the contrary — .

"We, the Anarchists, are sure that the workers themselves, having various relatives, [at least] a few in all parts of the country, and understanding thoroughly the elements essential in their work — especially when there are 4,000 of you — will solve the problem much more simply and quickly than the Government. We think, then, that you have only to create mobile working units, bringing together men capable because of their knowledge, aptitude, and contacts, to act energetically and with success. Once their mission is finished, these working units would cease to exist and their members would rejoin the mass of workers in the plant. What do you think of that?"

Unanimous and prolonged plaudits were my answer. And at the same time several voices shouted: “Yes! Yes! Exactly! . .. We have prepared everything necessary ... Yes, we can go on. We have considered the question for weeks.”

“Attention, comrades,” I went on. “You are lacking fuel. The Government has given up furnishing you with any. Without fuel the Nobel plant cannot run. Will you be able to get it for yourselves by your own means?”

“Yes, yes,” a man responded. “There are fifteen men at the plant, all ready and organized to go into the countryside. Each one, through his contacts, will easily find the right sort of fuel for the plant.”

“And to bring that fuel here?”

“We have already been in conference with the comrades on the railroads. We shall have cars and everything necessary. One of our groups is taking care of that.”

“And as to the market?”

“No difficulty, Comrade. We know the clientele of the plant 3nd we can readily dispose of the products.”

I glanced at Shlyapnikov and the others. They were rolling their eyes terribly, and nervously tapping the table with their finger-tips.

“Well, my friends,” I continued, “Under these circumstances our Anarchist advice is simple: Act, produce, go to it! However, one word more. It goes without saying that you will not act as capitalist bosses — no? You are not going to exploit the workers? You are not going to constitute yourselves as a corporation and sell shares?”

They laughed. And immediately some workers got up and said that of course all work would be done in a collective manner in perfect camaraderie, and only in order to be able to live. The plant committee would watch over the economy of the enterprise, the receipts would be divided equitably, and by common agreement, if there was an excess of receipts, it would form an operating fund. “And,” they concluded, “if we commit acts contrary to the solidarity of the workers, we give the Government carte blanche to penalize us. In the opposite case, it has only to let us alone and to have full confidence in us.”

“All right, my friends,” I finished in turn, “you have only to get going. I wish you good courage and good luck.”

A thunder of applause ensued. Extraordinary animation, replacing the previous torpor, now reigned in the big hall. On all sides the audience acclaimed our joint conclusion, and no longer paid any attention to the Government representatives, who sat glued to their chairs, immobile, their features drawn.

Shlyapnikov whispered something into the ear of the chairman, who shook his bell frantically. Finally calm was re-established. Then Shlyapnikov spoke again.

Coldly, although visibly angry, measuring his words and accompanying them with the gestures of an Army general, he asserted that, "as a member of the Government", he had nothing to change, nor to add to what he had said. Nor would he retract any part of it. He repeated that the decision of the Government to close the Nobel refinery was final.

"You yourselves put us in power," Shlyapnikov said. "You voluntarily, freely, entrusted us with the destinies of the country. You had confidence in us and in our acts. You, the working class of the country, wished us to take care of your interests. So it's for us to know them, to understand them, to watch out for them. It goes without saying that it's our task to busy ourselves with the true general interests of the working class and not with those of this or that little fraction. We can't act — a child could understand this — in the interest of each separate enterprise. It is logical and natural to elaborate and establish plans of action for the whole of the nation, for both the workers and the peasants.

"These plans must safeguard the interests of the whole. The contrary, that is, to take or tolerate measures favoring a particular group, would be ridiculous, and contrary to the general interests of the people, and criminal toward the working class in its entirety. Our inability to solve immediately the various complex problems of this moment is transitory. It can be explained by the terrible actual conditions, after the evils we have lived through, the chaos we hardly have emerged from. The working class ought to understand this and be patient.

"The present situation does not depend on our wishes. It was not made by us. We all suffer from its painful and fatal consequences. They are the same for everybody, and will be for some time to come. So the workers must manage like everyone else, instead of looking for privileges for special groups. Such an attitude would be essentially bourgeois, egoistic, and disorganizing. If certain workers, pushed by the Anarchists, those petty-bourgeois wreckers *par excellence*, don't wish to understand, so much the worse for them! We have no time to waste with backward elements and their leaders."

And Shlyapnikov ended up by saying, in an aggressive menacing tone:

“In any event, I must warn the workers of this plant and also the Anarchist gentlemen, those professional wreckers, that the Government can change nothing in its carefully considered decisions; one way or another, it will make them be respected. If the workers resist, so much the worse for them! They will simply be laid off by force, and without indemnity. The most recalcitrant, the leaders, enemies of the proletarian cause in general, will expose themselves besides, to consequences infinitely graver. And as to the Anarchist gentlemen, let them take care! The Government cannot tolerate their mixing in affairs that are none of their business, nor their inciting honest workers to disobedience... The Government will know how to penalize them, and will not hesitate. Consider it said!”

That speech was received with extreme reserve.

After the meeting, the plant workers surrounded me, indignant, outraged. They had caught the deceitful note of Shlyapnikov.

“His speech was clever but false,” they said. “In our case it is not a question of a privileged position. Such an interpretation betrays our real thought. The Government has only to let the workers and peasants act freely *throughout* the country. Then it will see: things will speedily reorganize themselves, and we’ll come to an agreement to the satisfaction of everybody. And the Government will have fewer worries and fewer excuses to make.”

Always in such cases the same two conceptions were manifested and opposed — the government-statist conception and the social-libertarian conception. Each had its reasons and its arguments.

What made the workers indignant were the threats against them and us. “A Socialist government should have recourse to other means to get at the truth,” they contended. But they had no illusions about the outcome of the conflict. And, in fact, a few weeks later, the Nobel plant was closed and the workers laid off, all resistance being impossible against the measures taken by the “ workers’” government against the workers.

Here is a memory with a different scene:

In the summer of 1918, after a sojourn at the revolutionary front against Germany, in the Ukraine, I revisited the little town of Bobrov, province of Voronezh, where my family lived.

The members of the local Bolshevik committee, all young people, knew me personally and knew of my ability as a teacher in adult education. They

proposed that I organize the educational work of that region. At that time such undertakings bore the name of *Proletcult*, meaning Proletarian Culture.

I accepted on two conditions: 1. That I should receive no sort of remuneration, so that I could preserve full independence in methods and action; 2. That the complete independence of my educational activity was to be strictly maintained.

The committee accepted, and the town Soviet naturally confirmed this action. Then I called the first meeting of the new institution thus created, sending out a large number of invitations and notices to the labor unions in Bobrov, to [workers and peasants in] the surrounding villages, and to the intellectuals in that area.

On the evening of the meeting I found myself before some thirty sedate, distrustful, almost hostile individuals. Instantly 1 understood: these people had expected a standard meeting, a Bolshevik "commissar" with dictatorial gestures, revolver in his belt, giving orders and commands to be obeyed to the letter.

But this time these good folk met with something entirely different. Speaking to them as a friend, I gave them to understand at once that it was a question, in our work, of their own initiative, of their spirit, of their will and energy. I assured them that any intention to command, dictate, or impose anything at all upon them was completely foreign to me. And I invited them to establish, [of their own volition] and to the best of their ability, sound educational and cultural work in the region centering around Bobrov.

Then, addressing myself to their good will, and to their natural capacities, I specified, at the same time, my own role: a friendly and effective helper in the drawing up of plans and programs, and in recruiting a teaching force; with suggestions and advice from me based on my knowledge and experience. Too, 1 sketched out a rough scheme of what we could accomplish, if we worked together with all our hearts. An exchange of views, wholly free, followed my speech. And a certain amount of interest was awakened among the audience.

At least a hundred persons came to the second gathering in Bobrov, with the atmosphere much more friendly and confident. But I needed three or four meetings for the ice to be completely broken and mutual confidence fully established. Since my deep sincerity was beyond doubt and as the task seemed to everybody concerned interesting and achievable, a keen sympathy grew up among us all, and a great enthusiasm developed in

some.

Then began a feverish activity, the scope and effects of which quickly surpassed all my expectations. Dozens of men, coming from the bosom of the people, and often scarcely educated themselves, were so eager about the project and set to work with such ardor and dexterity, and with such a richness of ideas and resulting achievements, that soon I had only to combine and co-ordinate their efforts, or to prepare for more important and larger accomplishments.

Our meetings, always public, and at which the entire audience was at liberty to contribute ideas and efforts, began to attract the peasant men, and even the peasant women, from villages some distance from Bobrov. Our work was talked about throughout the whole region, and on market-days those educational meetings invariably attracted a highly picturesque crowd.

Presently an excellent people's theatrical troupe was organized and made ready to give roving performances, chosen with method and taste.

Quarters for us were quickly found and equipped for all our needs. Furniture was repaired like new, broken windows replaced, school supplies (notebooks, pencils, pens, ink, et cetera) unearthed in no time, whereas formerly their absence constituted a serious handicap. Such were the first steps in the new educational project. A library was instituted, the first gifts of books came in, and evening courses for adults began.

But the local authorities sent their reports to the Center, [by that time] in Moscow. Thus [the higher-ups] learned that I was acting according to my own free will, without bothering about "instructions" or "prescriptions" from above; and that we all were working freely, without submitting to the decrees and orders from Moscow which, for the most part, were not at all applicable in our region or were even totally inept.

One fine day I began to receive "from down there", through the intermediary of the Brobov Soviet, huge packages stuffed with decrees, prescriptions, rules, formal orders, programs, projects, and plans — every one completely fantastic and absurd. I was instructed to hold strictly to the text of all this stupid waste paper, these impossible and unrealizable orders.

I leafed through all that "literature" and continued my activity without thinking any more about it.

That was followed by an ultimatum: either submit or get out. Naturally I

chose the latter alternative, knowing that submitting and applying the instructions from Moscow inevitably would kill the work we had undertaken. (I ask the reader to believe that the work in itself interested me; I concentrated loyally on my professional duties, without any mention of my Anarchist ideas, it was not at all a question of any sort of "subversive" propaganda, and this question was never brought up in the orders addressed to me. The Center simply would not allow anyone not to follow its regulations blindly).

It was over. After a moving farewell meeting, where everyone felt that the work just coming into being already was compromised, I left Bobrov.

My successor, a loyal servitor of Moscow, followed the Center's instructions to the letter. Some time afterwards, [all of the adult students and other participants in the educational enterprise] deserted, and the school, which a short time before had been full of life, disappeared. And a few months later, this Proletarian Culture project failed lamentably all over the country.

Like the workers in the Nobel oil refinery in Petrograd, those in various enterprises in several cities and industrial regions wished to take certain measures on their own, either to keep going works that were threatened with being closed, or to assure and organize exchange with the countryside, or to cope with some difficulty or other: to improve defective service, resolve unsettled situations, correct mistakes, fill in gaps. *But systematically and everywhere, the Bolshevik authorities prohibited the masses from all independent action, although they themselves were most often incapable of acting effectively and opportunely.*

Thus, for example, the soviet of the city of Elizabethgrad (in Southern Russia), having confessed itself powerless to solve certain local economic problems of great urgency, and its bureaucratic procedures offering no hope of success, the workers of several plants requested of the president of that soviet authorization to deal with those problems themselves, to create the necessary organizations, and to group around them all the city's workers to make sure of an effective outcome.[28] In short, to act under the control of the soviet.

But as everywhere else those who made this proposal were severely reprimanded and threatened with penalties for their "disorganizing" tactics.

At the approach of winter, several other cities lacked fuel, not only for the operation of industries but also for heating homes.

In Russia, dwellings were always heated with wood. In the forested parts of the country, which were very numerous, getting in a supply of fuel in opportune time — usually toward the end of summer — was very simple. Before the Revolution the owners of large firewood depots often hired the peasants in the neighboring villages to cut down the trees and move the fallen sections either to the nearest railroad or to the depot itself. In Siberia and regions in the North, this custom was universal. After the annual harvest, the peasants, free from all work in the fields, willingly undertook this task, for very low wages.

After the Revolution, however, the city Soviets, transformed into administrative organs by the will of the Government, were formally charged with the necessary provisioning. Therefore it was up to them to deal with the peasants. And this was all the more necessary because the owners of the forests and firewood depots were not to be found, and the railroads functioned badly.

But because of their bureaucratic slowness — a disease typical of all official administrations — the Soviets almost never managed to achieve this task in time to meet the need.

The propitious moment having come, the workers and inhabitants of the cities offered voluntarily to go and deal with the peasants and assure the delivery of the wood. Naturally the Soviets refused, invariably describing this gesture as “arbitrary” and “disorganizing”, and claiming that the provisioning of fuel would be done by the official units of the State, the Soviets, according to a general plan set up by the central government.

As a result, either the cities remained without fuel or it was bought at fantastically high prices, the work having become exceedingly difficult and the roads being almost impassable after September, because of rain and mud. Often the peasants flatly refused to undertake this job in that season, even for high wages, not being tempted much by the paper rubles issued by the Bolsheviks. Then they were compelled to do it by military order.

I could fill dozens of pages with analogous examples, taken at random from all fields. The reader has only to vary and multiply by himself those which I have mentioned: he never could go beyond the truth!

Everywhere in Soviet Russia and in all things the same phenomenon appeared — production, transports, exchange, and commerce fell into an inconceivable chaos. The masses were denied any right to act on their own initiative. And the “administrations” (soviets and others) were constantly bankrupt.

The cities lacked bread, meat, milk, vegetables. The countryside lacked salt, sugar, industrial products. Clothing rotted in the warehouses in the cities. And in the provinces no one had anything to wear.

Disorder, negligence, and impotence reigned everywhere and in everything. But when those interested wanted to intervene so that they might energetically solve all these problems, nothing could be done about it. The Government intended to "govern". It would not tolerate any "competition". The slightest manifestation of an independent spirit of initiative was called "a breach of discipline" and was threatened with severe penalties.

The grandest conquests, the most beautiful hopes of the Revolution, were in the process of disappearing. And the most tragic aspect was that the Russian people, on the whole, were not aware of it. They "let matters alone", confident in [the ability of] "their" government and in the future. The Government utilized the time it needed to set up an imposing coercive force, blindly obedient. *And when the people understood* [what had happened], *it was too late*.

These personal experiences and observations confirmed factually our fundamental ideal: that the true Revolution cannot be accomplished except by means of the *free* activity of millions of interested working people themselves. Once the Government mixes in, and takes the place of the people, the *life* of the Revolution leaves it; everything stops, everything retreats, everything has to be begun again.

Let no one say to us that the Russian people "didn't want to act", nor that "they had to be compelled by force" to act "for their own good in spite of themselves". All that is sheer invention. During a great revolution, the people ask for nothing better than to act. What they have need of is the disinterested help of experienced revolutionaries, of educated men, specialists, technicians. The truth is that the castes, the groups, and the men desirous of power and privileges, stuffed with false doctrines and mistrusting the people, in whom they have no confidence, *prevent the people from acting, and, instead of helping them, seek to govern them*, to lead them, and exploit them, in a different way. And to justify themselves, they create the myth of their "powerlessness". So long as the people, that is. the laboring masses, of all countries do not understand this and do not veto the reactionary aspirations of all these elements, all revolutions will end in failure and the effective emancipation of Labor will remain an empty dream.

We have just said that the Russian people were not precisely aware of the mortal peril which confronted the Revolution.

It was natural, however, that, under the new conditions created by the Bolshevik government, the criticisms by and the ideas of the Anarchists, calling for freedom of initiative and action by the toiling masses themselves, found an increasingly wide echo among the country's population.

It was then that the libertarian movement began to achieve rapid success in Russia. And it was then that the Bolshevik regime, more and more disturbed by that success, decided to employ against the threatening Anarchism means approved by all governments — *an implacable repression*, reinforced by ruse and violence.

[28] In 1918–1919 this was still possible.

Part IV. Repression

Chapter 1. The Preparations

One notable task had been successfully performed by the “Soviet power”: in the spring of 1918 it already had pushed the organization of its governmental and statist cadres — cadres of police, the Army, and those of the “Soviet” bureaucracy — fairly far. Thus the base of the dictatorship was created, sufficiently solid, and completely subordinated to those who had established it and who were maintaining it. It was possible to count on it.

It was with these forces of coercion, disciplined and blindly obedient, that the Bolshevik government crushed several attempts at independent action which were made here and there.

Also it was with the help of those forces, rapidly enlarging, that it ended by submitting the Russian masses to its fierce dictatorship.

And it was with those same forces, once it was sure of the unreserved obedience and passivity of the major part of the population, that it turned against the Anarchists.

During the revolutionary days of October, 1917, the tactics of the Bolsheviki with regard to the Anarchists boiled down to this: to utilize the latter to the maximum as elements of combat and “destruction”, helping them, to the necessary degree (with arms, et cetera) but supervising them closely.

However, when the victory was achieved and power won, the Bolshevik regime changed its method.

Let us cite a striking example:

During the hard fighting in Moscow in October, 1917, the staff of the *Dvintsi* (the Dvinsk regiment, previously referred to) was installed in the quarters of the Moscow Soviet. In the course of events a Bolshevik “revolutionary committee’ also was set up in Moscow and proclaimed itself “the supreme power”. And directly the staff of the *Dvintsi*, known as [being composed of Anarchists], became the object of supervision, mistrust, and suspicion by that committee. A net of spies was spread around it. A sort of blockade impeded its movements.

Gratchov (an Anarchist who commanded the regiment) saw clearly that the Bolsheviks were concerned, not with the true Revolution, nor with the immediate problems of the new Russion nation, but only with rivalry and

the taking of power. He felt that ihey were going to emasculate the Revolution and lead it to its ruin. A deep anguish seized him. In vain he asked himself how to seize and stop in time the criminal hand of the new power, ready to garrote the Revolution. And he conferred with several comrades who, alas, were powerless like himself.

For want of something better he had the idea of arming the workers as well as possible. He sent rifles, machine guns, and ammunition to several factories. Thus he hoped to be able to [help] prepare the masses for an eventual revolt against the new importers.

But Gratchov soon perished, and suddenly. Summoned by the Bolshevik authorities to Nishni-Novgorod “on military business”, he was shot, under exceedingly mysterious circumstances, by a soldier who didn’t yet know how to handle a rifle. Certain indications impel us to suppose that he was assassinated by a mercenary in the pay of the “Soviet” power. [29]

Later all the revolutionary regiments of Petrograd and Moscow which had participated in the fighting in October were disarmed by the Government. In Moscow the first regiment to be disarmed (by force) was that from Dvinsk. And soon afterward, throughout the country, all citizens, without exception, and *including the workers and their organizations*, were ordered, under penalty of death, to turn in their arms to the Bolshevik military authorities.

[29] The circumstances connected with the death of the Anarchist Durruti to Spain in 1936 pointedly recall the Gratchov case.

Chapter 2. The Discharge

In the spring of 1918 persecutions of the Anarchists by the Russian "Communist" government began in a general, systematic, and decisive way. The peace of Brest-Litovsk concluded, the Lenin regime felt itself sufficiently solid to undertake a fundamental struggle against its adversaries "on the left" — the left Social Revolutionaries and the Anarchists.

It had to act methodically and prudently. .

At first the Communist press, on orders from the Government, started a campaign of slander and false accusations against the Anarchists, growing more violent from day to day. At the same time, they actively prepared the ground in the factories, in the Army, and among the public, through meetings and lectures. Everywhere they sounded the spirit of the public. Soon the regime was certain that it could rely on its troops, and that the masses would remain more or less indifferent or powerless [in the face of drastic action against the leftist opposition].

Then, on the night of April 12, under a false and absurd pretext, [the quarters of] all the Anarchist organizations in Moscow — and principally those of the Federation of Anarchist Groups in that city — were attacked and sacked by troops and the police force. For several hours the capital took on the appearance of a city in a state of siege. Even artillery took part in the "action".

This operation served as a signal for the sacking of the libera-tarian organizations in nearly all the important cities of Russia. And as always the provincial authorities exceeded in zeal those in the capital.

Leon Trotsky, who for two weeks had prepared the blow, and who had carried out in person, among the regiments, an unbridled agitation against the "anarcho-bandits", had the satisfaction of being able to make his famous declaration: "At last the Soviet government, with an iron broom, has rid Russia of Anarchism."

Eternal and cruel irony of human history: Fifteen years afterward Josef Stalin used the same formula and applied the same "iron broom" against Trotskyism, to the great indignation of Trotsky.

I confess that I have felt some sentiment of satisfaction about this act of poetic justice.[30]

That first aggression, however, was only a timid beginning, a “sketch”, a try-out.

The *idea* of Anarchism was not yet declared outside of the law. And it is true that a certain freedom of speech, and of the press, or rather, of the profession of faith, though very restricted, still remained possible. In a relative measure the libertarian organizations — pale shadows of the past — survived the “catastrophe” and resumed their activity.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik Party crushed the Social Revolutionary Party (as well as other leftist factions, the “Maximalists”, *et al*). Wb will not concern ourselves much with this — these struggles having had neither the same scope nor the same interest as that directed against the Anarchists. One might consider the duel between the left Social Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviki as a conflict between two political parties over the taking of power, which has only moderate interest for us.

We must mention, however, that, after having got rid, from the Government itself, of several members of the S.R. Party, the Communist Party made war on it without mercy. And by the end of the summer of 1918 the left Social Revolutionaries found themselves in the position of outlaws. Soon they disappeared as a party. Then, individually, their militants were tracked down all over the country and suppressed to the last man.

The tragic fate of the unfortunate Maria Spiridonova spells one of the most terrifying pages of this inhuman repression. Arrested, dragged from prison to prison, tortured mentally and perhaps physically, her days were ended in some filthy cell, if not in a cellar, by the bullets of the Cheka. (I lack precise knowledge about her death). And how many other militants of that party, whose only crime was to conceive differently the tasks and the course of the Revolution, had to undergo a like fate!

[30] These lines were written before the assassination of Trotsky.

Chapter 3. Unrestrained Fury

In 1919–1920 the protests and movements of the Russian workers and peasants against the monopolistic and terroristic procedures of the "Soviet" power toward them were notably intensified. The Government, more and more cynical and implacable in its despotism, replied with increasingly accentuated reprisals.

Naturally the Anarchists again were body and soul with the deceived and oppressed masses in the open conflict. Supporting the workers, they demanded for them and their organizations the right to control production [of commodities] themselves, without the intervention of politicians. Supporting the peasants, they demanded for them independence, self-rule, and the right to deal directly and freely with the workers. In the names of both, they demanded the restitution of what the workers had achieved through the Revolution, and which had been "frustrated" by the "Communist" power, particularly the restoration of "a real free Soviet regime", re-establishment of "political liberties" for all revolutionary tendencies, et cetera. In short, they demanded that the gains of October, 1917, be returned to the people themselves — to the free workers' and peasants' organizations.

Naturally, too, the Anarchists unmasked and combatted, in the names of these principles, both in writing and by word of mouth, the policy of the Government.

As they had foreseen, the Bolshevik regime ended by making war on them also. After the first major operation in that direction in the spring of 1918, the persecutions continued in an almost uninterrupted manner, taking on a more and more brutal and decisive character. And by the end of that year, several libertarian organizations in the provinces were sacked once more. Those which by chance escaped this were not permitted by the authorities to do anything.

In 1919, about the same time as the repression in Great Russia, persecutions also began in the Ukraine. (For several reasons, the Bolshevik dictatorship was installed there much later than elsewhere). In every area where the Bolsheviki set foot, the libertarian groups were liquidated, their militants arrested, their publications suspended, their bookstores destroyed, lectures forbidden.

It is unnecessary to say that all these measures were carried out by police, military, or administrative order, and were wholly arbitrary, without

accusation, explanation, or any judicial procedure. The model for such action had been established, once and for all, by the, “precedent” instituted by Trotsky himself in the spring of 1918.

[Another fateful action] by Trotsky was his issuance, in the summer of 1919, of his now famous order No. 1824, declaring the so-called Makhnovist movement outside the law. Following that, Anarchists were arrested almost everywhere in Russia, at the same time as Nestor Makhno’s partisans were. And very often they were immediately shot, simply on the order of a Red officer.

In the majority of cases, the suppression of the libertarian organizations was accompanied by acts of savage violence, and of senseless vandalism by the *Chekists* (Communist secret police) and the deceived, unnerved, or over-excited Red soldiers. The militants, men and women alike, were brutally treated, as “criminals”. Their quarters were demolished, their books burned. It was a furious repression.

At the close of that summer, a general sacking of Anarchist organizations took place in the Ukraine. And by the end of the same year, there remained only remnants of an Anarchist movement in Russia.

[Here is an odd turn in Bolshevik history].

Early in October, 1920, the “Soviet” power, having need of the assistance of the revolutionary Makhnovist partisans in fighting Baron Peter Wrangel’s “White” troops, effected an alliance with Makhno. According to the agreement on which that alliance was based, all imprisoned and exiled Anarchists were to have their freedom restored and be given the right to work openly in the Ukraine and anywhere in Russia.

Though naturally holding back on the fulfilment of that provision, the Bolsheviks had, however, to interrupt the prosecutions and release several militants. But as soon as Wrangel was defeated, the “Soviet” government treacherously attacked Makhno and again struck out violently at the libertarian movement in the Ukraine.

At the end of November, with Wrangel just vanquished, the authorities arrested in Kharkov many Anarchists gathered from many parts of Russia for a legal congress. At the same time, they tracked down libertarians all over the Ukraine, organizing a regular hunt, with beaters and ambushes, and taking as “hostages” parents, wives, and children — as if they wanted to have revenge for the recent forced concession and to make up for lost time, seeking now to exterminate “the wicked race of Anarchists” down to the children.

To justify this disgraceful action, the Bolshevik regime explained its break with Makhno on the ground of so-called treason by the latter, and invented a fantastic “great Anarchist plot against the Soviet power”.

The real story of this purported plot is fantastic and deserves to be told. Thus:

Several days before the decisive victory over Wrangel, when the defeat of the latter was no longer in doubt, the central telegraph station in Moscow ordered all the stations in the provinces to shut off their receiving apparatus, and accordingly *not to take* an urgent and absolutely secret message from Lenin, which was supposed to be received only by two other main stations — the one in Kharkov and the other in Crimea.

This order was not obeyed by a libertarian sympathizer in charge of one of the stations in the provinces. And he took down the following telegram:

> Determine the Anarchist strength in the Ukraine, particularly in the Makhnovist region.
>
> Lenin.

Several days later another telegram was sent under the same conditions:

> Exercise active supervision over all Anarchists. Prepare documents as much as possible of a criminal nature of which they can be accused. Keep orders and documents secret. Send the necessary instructions everywhere.
>
> Lenin.

And after a few more days, the third and last laconic message:

> Arrest all the Anarchists and incriminate them.
>
> Lenin.

All these telegrams were addressed to Christian Rakovsky, then president of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Ukraine, and to other military and civil authorities.

On receipt of the third telegram, the sympathetic telegraphist warned an Anarchist comrade, who hastened to Kharkov to apprise the libertarians there of the repression in preparation. But he arrived too late: the action already had been taken. Nearly all of the Kharkov Anarchists, and also those who had come for the congress, were in prison. Their quarters were

closed.

Such was the “plot” of the Ukrainian Anarchists against the Soviet power.

At the time of the agreement between the government “of the Soviets” and Nestor Makhno, the Makhnovist delegation [which negotiated it] had officially established the number of persons imprisoned or exiled and requiring liberation at more than 200,000. For the most part, these were peasants arrested en masse for sympathizing with the Makhnovist movement. We do not know how many *conscious Anarchists* there were among them. And we will never know how many persons, in this period, were shot or disappeared without leaving any trace, in the various local prisons, many of which were secret and unknown to the public.

During the Kronstadt uprising in March, 1921, the Bolshevik government made new mass arrests of Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists. Again they organized a sweeping man-hunt across the country, seeking to capture every remaining militant who dared raise his voice. For, contrary to the lies spread by the “Soviet” power, inside Russia and elsewhere, the Kronstadt revolt and the movements which accompanied it were strongly imbued with libertarian spirit.

Any mass movement — a workers’ strike, peasants’ protests, or discontent among the soldiers or sailors, invariably had repercussions affecting the Anarchists. And after the Bolsheviki threw into prison individuals having no other connection with the libertarians except a community of ideas, or were relatives, or casual acquaintances. To admit openly having the same viewpoint as the Anarchists sufficed to send one to prison, from which one got out with difficulty, or generally not at all.

The circles of Anarchist youth were brutally suppressed in 1919 and again in 1921. These groups were engaged in teaching and studying communally, among other things, the Anarchist doctrine, with which it had most sympathy. The Bolshevik action was impelled simply by the desire to cut short the interest of the youth in libertarian ideas. Only the Marxian dogma remained acceptable [to the Government].

In the summer of 1921 the Soviet press announced that in the vicinity of Zhmerinka (a small city in the province of Podolia, in the Ukraine) 30 or 40 Anarchists living in that area and having connections in other cities in the Southern region, had been “discovered and liquidated” — that is to say, *shot.* This bit of candor by the Bolsheviks was an extremely rare phenomenon, explainable only by assuming an intention of cautioning such youth and discouraging them from continuing their activity. The names of all those who perished thus never could be determined. But it was

established that they included some of the best militants among the libertarian youth.

Around the same time, and again according to the Soviet press itself, the Lenin government imprisoned (and shot some of them) in Odessa, the members of a fairly large and important Anarchist group which, among other action, was spreading propaganda in Soviet institutions and circles (even in the Odessa Soviet and in the Bolshevik Party's local committee). That constituted, the party press said, the crime of "high treason".

Official dispatches stated that 92 Tolstoyan (absolute pacifist) Anarchists were shot up to the end of 1922, chiefly for refusal to serve in the Army. And many Tolstoyans languished in prison.

One of these good pacifists found himself one day face to face with J. Peters, the infamous executioner of the Cheka (secret Communist police) in one of the Offices of that force. Miraculously he was about to be set free. Waiting his turn, he was peacefully picking lice out of his heavy beard and throwing them on the floor. (In that period, lice were the most intimate friends of man in Russia. They were commonly referred to affectionately as *semashki*, from the name of Nikolai Semashko, People's Commissar of Public Health — stinging but suggestive irony).

"Why do you throw them down like that instead of killing them?" the astonished Peters asked.

"I never kill living creatures."

"Oh," said Peters, highly amused. "That's funny, really. You let yourself be bitten by lice, bed-bugs, and fleas? I must say you are crazy, my friend. I myself have suppressed several hundred men — bandits, that is — and it didn't bother me at all."

He could not get over his amazement and kept looking curiously at the peaceful Tolstoyan, taking him surely for a harmless idiot.

I could continue this list of martyrs to great length.

I could cite hundreds of instances where the victims were drawn into snares to be shot, either after "interrogation" and torture, or even on the spot, sometimes in a field, or at the edge of a forest, or in a railway car at an abandoned station.

I could cite hundreds of cases of brutal and disgraceful searches and arrests, accompanied by violence and all sorts of torments. [31]

I could give a long list of libertarians, many of them very young, who were thrown into prison or exiled into unhealthy regions, where they died after extended and terrible sufferings.

I could tell of revolting cases of individual repression resulting from shameless informing, cynical treachery, or repugnant provocation.

The Bolsheviki suppressed men for upholding an idea if it was not exactly that of the Government and its privileged clique. They sought to suppress the idea itself, and to wipe out all independent thought. Also they frequently suppressed men who knew and who could reveal certain facts.

I shall confine myself to a few individual examples, particularly odious.

[31] The author of this work was one of those subjected to violence by the Bolsheviki.

Chapter 4. The Case of Leon Tchorny and Fanny Baron

Thirteen Anarchists, held for no plausible reason in the Taganka prison in Moscow, inaugurated a hunger strike in July, 1921, demanding either to be arraigned or set free. This action happened to coincide with the gathering of the International Congress of Red Trade Unions (the *Profinterri*) in the capital city. A group of foreign Syndicalist delegates (mainly French) questioned the .."Soviet" government about the strike, having learned of it, with full details, from the prisoners' relatives. The questioning also bore on other analagous cases, and even on the Bolshevik policy of repressing Anarchists and Syndicalists.

In the name of the Government, Leon Trotsky cynically answered: "We do not imprison the real Anarchists. Those whom we hold in prison are not Anarchists, but criminals and bandits who cover themselves by claiming to be Anarchists."

Well informed, the delegates did not give up. They carried their interrogations to the tribune of the Congress, demanding at least the setting free of the Anarchists confined in the Taganka bastile. That questioning caused a great scandal at the Congress, and forced the Government to give ground — for it feared more serious revelations. It promised to free the thirteeen Taganka prisoners. The strike ended on the eleventh day.

After the departure of the delegates, and after letting the affair drag out for two months, during which it sought an adequate pretext for accusing the prisoners, still behind the bars of Taganka, of serious crime, and thereby get out of keeping its promise, the Government finally felt compelled to release the thirteen in September. And immediately it expelled all but three from the U.S.S.R.

In revenge (vengeance was a constant element in the Bolshevik repression), and especially to justify, before the foreign workers and their delegates, its terrorist procedures against "the so-called libertarians", the Lenin regime staged, a little later, a brazen frame-up against [some of the same group].

For purported "criminal" acts, and particularly for the alleged counterfeiting of Soviet bank notes, its agents shot, (naturally in secret, in the night, in one of the cellars of the Cheka, without the shadow of any judicial procedure) several of the most honest, sincere, and devoted Anarchists: the young Fanny Baron (whose husband was in prison), the

well-known militant Leon Tchorny (whose real name was Tourtchaninoff), and others.

It was proven afterward that the libertarians who were shot had nothing to do with the specified “crimes”. And it was proven also that the counterfeiting was done by the *Cheka* itself. Two of its agents, one named Steiner (but called Kamenny) and a Chekist chauffeur were introduced into libertarian circles, and at the same time into certain criminal hang-outs, in order to be able to show “’connections” between the two and build up a case against the chosen victims. The indispensable appearances established, the “case” was formulated, and made public.

Thus, to justify its other crimes, with the aid of a new one, the Bolshevik government sacrificed several more Anarchists and tried to sully their memory.

Chapter 5. The Case of Lefevre, Vergeat and Lepetit

Three French militants vanished without trace in another outstanding case. They were: Raymond Lefevre, Vergeat, and Lepetit, delegates to the Congress of the Communist International which took place in Moscow in the summer of 1920.

Raymond Lefevre, though a member of the Communist Party, repeatedly voiced gloomy sentiments at that time, and was fully aware of the false route his ideological comrades had taken. And Vergeat and Lepetit, both Anarcho-Syndicalists, openly displayed their anger, and did not conceal their criticism of the state of things in Russia. More than once, Lepetit, his head in his hands, said, while weighing the report he would have to make to his French Syndicalist comrades: “But what do I want to say to them?”

The Congress over, the three worked for several days and nights getting their notes and documents together. Then, repressive measures against them began when, on the eve of their return to France, they refused to hand over their *dossiers* to the functionaries of the Soviet power, who claimed to be in charge of carrying the documents to their destination. Lefevre even refused to trust his notes and papers to the Russian members of his party.

So the Moscovite politicians decided to sabotage the departure of the trio. Under false pretexts, they were not permitted to take the route which Cachin and the other Communist delegates followed, but for mysterious reasons the Soviet government arranged to “have them leave by way of the North”.

Anxious to protect their mission, and believing themselves sufficiently protected by the presence of the Communist Lefevre, who was going to make the trip with them, Vergeat and Lepetit planned to go back to France in time to take part in a confederal Congress, at which they were supposed to present their reports.

Their Calvary began with a long and difficult trip from Moscow to Murmansk (Russia’s extreme Northern port, on the Arctic Ocean), which was made under cruel conditions. “They are sabotaging us,” Lepetit said with reason. On the train, troubled by the intense cold, and without warm clothing or food, they approached the Chekists who accompanied the convoy, asking them for what they absolutely needed. In vain they referred to their capacity as delegates, receiving this reply: “We are completely

unaware that there are delegates on the train. We have received no orders on the subject."

It was only at the repeated insistence of Lefevre that they were given some food. Thus, suffering from many privations and expecting worse difficulties, they arrived in Murmansk. There they took refuge among friendly fishermen and awaited the fulfilment of the promise made in Moscow, the coming of a boat which would take them to Sweden.

Three weeks thus passed for them in restlessness and astonishment at not seeing the promised boat arrive. And they began to doubt the possibility of their reaching France in time to complete their mission.

Then Lefevre wrote a letter to a friend in Moscow. Not receiving a reply, he sent a second, and a third, all without result. Later it was learned that the three letters were intercepted and sent to Trotsky, who confiscated them. In the third one Lefevre gave a poignant description of their plight and announced their desperate determination to cross the Arctic Ocean in a fishing boat to get out of the land of the Soviets. "We are going to our death," he wrote.

They got together enough money to buy a boat. And despite the pleading of several companions and of fishermen on the coast, they embarked and went — [beyond doubt] to their death, as Raymond Lefevre had said. For they were never seen again.

Definite proof of this assassination coldly arranged by Moscow does not exist — or the persons who possess it keep it secret, for reasons easy to understand. Naturally the Bolsheviks deny it. But can one doubt it when one knows the firm and intransigent attitude of Vergeat and Lepetit while in Russia, the usual procedure of the Bolshevik government, the handicaps placed on their departure? And it must be remembered that Cachin and the other Communist delegates from France were able to make the return journey without difficulty and arrived in time to repeat to the Congress in Tours the lessons they had learned in Moscow.

In any event, we have related faithfully the authentic facts of that episode which eventually became known in Russia. We believe that they speak eloquently enough for themselves. The reader can judge.

Chapter 6. A Personal Experience

Let me tell here of an experience of my own, of a less tragic nature, but one which throws light on certain Bolshevik procedures worthy /of being written up among the high exploits of State Communism. LAt the time of which I speak, this happening was far from unique in Russia. But since then it could not be repeated in a country wholly subjugated by its new masters.

In November, 1918, I arrived in the city of Kursk, in the Ukraine, to attend a congress of Ukrainian libertarians. In those days, such an assemblage was still possible in Ukrainia, in view of the special conditions in that region, then struggling against both the reaction and the German invasion. The Bolsheviki *tolerated* the Anarchists there, while utilizing and supervising them.

From the beginning of the Revolution, the laboring population in Kursk never had heard a lecture on Anarchism, the small local group not having the necessary strength, so that the few libertarian speakers went elsewhere. Taking advantage of my presence, the group proposed that I give a lecture on that subject, in a large hall. Naturally I accepted with joy.

It was necessary to ask for permission from the president of the local Soviet. He, an honest ex-worker, gave it to us readily. The precious document in hand, the hall was engaged two weeks in advance, and impressive posters were ordered a few days later and placed on walls. Everything was ready.

The lecture promised to be a great success for our ideas. Certain indications — talk around the city, crowds reading the posters, requests for information to the local group — left no doubt about the matter. Evidently the hall would be packed. Unaccustomed to such a response (for in Great Russia, by that time, no public lectures on Anarchism were possible) we felt a legitimate satisfaction.

Then, two days before the appointed date, the secretary 0f the sponsoring group came to see me, worried and indignant. He had just received a note from the president of the Bolshevik Com-mittee of Kursk (the real power there), informing him that “because of the holiday” the Anarchist lecture could not take place, and that he had so notified the custodian of the hall, which was now reserved by the Communist committee for a popular dancing party.

I hurried to the office of that committee, and had a stormy session with its president — whose name, if 1 recall correctly, was Rynditch (or it may have been Ryndin).

“What is this?” I demanded. “You, a Communist, do not recognize the rules of priority? We obtained the authorization of the Kursk Soviet and engaged the hall two weeks in advance, precisely to be certain of having it. The committee must await its turn.”

“I’m sorry, Comrade,” he answered, “but the decision of the Committee, which is, don’t forget, the supreme power in Kursk, and as such may have reasons of which you are ignorant and which supersede everything else, is irrevocable. Neither the president of the Soviet nor the custodian of the hall could have known in advance that the Committee was going to need the hall on that date. It is absolutely useless to discuss the matter, or to insist. I repeat, it is irrevocable. The lecture will not take place. Either hold it in another hall or on another date.”

“You know very well,” I said, “that it is not possible to arrange all that in two days. And then, there are no other halls large enough. Moreover, all the halls must already be taken for holiday parties. The lecture is out, that is all.”

“I’m sorry. Postpone it to another date. You will lose nothing. It can be arranged.”

“That would not be the same thing at all,” I contended. “Alterations like this always injure the cause greatly. Then, too, the posters were expensive. Furthermore, I have to leave Kursk quickly. But tell me — how are you going to manage on the evening scheduled for the lecture? It is my opinion that you are going to expose yourself to the resistance of the public, who certainly will come in large numbers to hear the lecture. The posters have been up for two weeks. The workers of Kursk and the surrounding country are awaiting it impatiently. It is too late to have notices of the change printed and posted. You will have difficulty imposing a dancing party on that crowd instead of the lecture which they will have come to hear.”

“That’s our affair. Don’t do anything. We will take full charge of it.”

“Therefore, fundamentally,” I pointed out, “the lecture is forbidden by your committee despite the authorization by the Soviet.”

“Oh, no, Comrade. We don’t forbid it at all. Set it for a date after the holidays. We will inform the people who come to ‘hear the lecture. That’s all.”

On this note we parted. I conferred with the local group and we decided to postpone the lecture until January 5, 1919. Accordingly we notified the Bolshevik Committee and the hall custodian. This change compelled me to delay my intended departure for Kharkov several days.

New posters were ordered. Beyond that, we decided, first, to let the Bolshevik authorities placate the public; and second, that I should remain in my hotel room that evening. For we surmised that a large crowd would demand, in spite of everything, that the lecture be given, and that finally, the Bolsheviki would feel obliged to yield. It was therefore necessary that the secretary of the group could summon me in case of need. Personally, I expected a great scandal, perhaps even a serious fracas.

The lecture had been scheduled for eight in the evening. Toward 8.30 I was called on the telephone. I heard the excited voice of the secretary say: "Comrade, the hall is literally besieged by a crowd which will listen to no explanations, and is demanding the lecture. The Bolsheviks are powerless to reason with them. Probably they will have to yield and the lecture will take place. Take a cab and come quickly."

A cab was at hand, and the trip was made speedily. From a distance I heard an extraordinary clamor in the street. Arriving at the scene, I saw a throng standing around the hall and cursing: "To the Devil with the dancing party! Enough of dancing parties! We are fed up with them. We want the lecture. We came for the lecture ... Lecture! .. . Lecture .. . Lecture!"

The secretary, watching, hurried to meet me. With difficulty we pushed through the mass. The hall was being mobbed. At the top of the stairs I found "Comrade" Rynditch haranguing the crowd, which continually shouted: "Lecture! Lecture!"

"You did well to come," the Bolshevik committee head threw at me, angrily. "You see what is happening This is your work."

Indignantly I said: "I warned you. You are responsible for all this. You took charge of arranging things. Well, go ahead! Fix things the way you want them. The best and simplest move would be to permit the lecture."

"No, no, no!" he shouted furiously. "Your lecture shall not take place, I guarantee."

I shrugged my shoulders.

Suddenly Rynditch said to me: "Look, Comrade: They won't listen to me. And I don't want to have to use force. You can arrange things. They'll listen

to you. Explain the situation to them and persuade them to go away peacefully. Make them listen to reason. Tell them that your lecture has been postponed. It is your duty to do what I ask."

I felt that if the lecture did not take place then, it would never take place. Also I was sure that it was definitely forbidden, and that quite likely I would be arrested.

Unequivocally I refused to speak to the people who jammed the stairway. With a shake of my head, I told the committee head: "No, I will not speak. You wanted this. Get out of it yourself."

The crowd, aware of our dispute, cursed more loudly. Rynditch tried to yell something. Wasted effort. His voice was drowned in a tempest of shouting. The crowd felt itself strong. It was having a good time, closing ranks, packing the staircases even more tightly if that were possible, and the landing, and the foyer in front of the hall's closed doors.

Now Rynditch made desperate guestures and again appealed to me. "Speak to them, speak to them, or it will end badly."

An idea came to me. I signaled for silence to the people who surrounded us. Instantly they quieted down. Then, sedately, spacing my words, I said:

"Comrades, the responsibility for this highly regrettable confusion belongs to the Bolshevik Committee of Kursk. We engaged the hall first for the lecture, two weeks in advance. Two days ago the committee, without even consulting us, took possession of the hall to hold a dance tonight. (Here the crowd demanded at the top of their lungs: "Down with the dance! Let's have the lecture!") That compelled us to postpone our lecture to a later date.

"However, I am the speaker and 1 am prepared to give the lecture right away. The Bolsheviks have formally forbidden it this evening. But you are the citizens of Kursk; you are the public. It is up to you to decide. 1 am entirely at your disposal. Choose, Comrades — either we postpone the lecture and go away peacefully and come back on January fifth, or if you want the lecture right .now, if you are really determined, act, take possession of the hall."

Hardly had I spoken these last words when the crowd applauded joyfully and yelled: "Lecture, right away! Lecture! Lecture!"

And with irresistible force it pushed toward the hall. Ryn-ditch was overwhelmed. The doors were opened. If not, they would have been forced. And the lights went on inside.

In a few moments the hall was filled. The audience, partly sitting, partly standing, calmed down. I had only to begin. But Rynditch climbed onto the platform. He addressed the audience: “Citizens, Comrades! Be patient for a few more minutes. The Bolshevik Committee is going to confer and make a final decision. They will communicate this to you directly. Probably the dance will not take place.’

“Hurrah!” the crowd shouted, carried away with joy over its apparent victory. “Lecture! Long live the lecture!”

They applauded again, happily.

Now the Bolshevik Committee retired to a nearby room to confer. Meanwhile the doors of the hall were closed, the audience patiently awaiting the decision. We supposed that this little comedy was being played by the Bolsheviki to save face.

A quarter of an hour passed.

Then, abruptly, the hall doors were opened, and a strong detachment of Chekist soldiers (special troops, a sort of State police, blindly devoted to the Lenin regime), rifles in hand, entered. Everyone in the audience, stunned, remained frozen in their places. Quickly, in an impressive silence, the soldiers poured into the hall, sliding along the walls, and behind the seats. One group remained near the entrance, with its rifles pointed at the audience.

(Afterwards it was learned that the Bolshevik Committee had first called upon the city barracks, asking that a regular regiment intervene. But the soldiers wanted explanations — at that stage this was still possible — declared that they, too, would like to hear the lecture, and refused to come. It was then that the committee summoned the Chekist detachment, which had been ready for all eventualities).

Directly the committee members reappeared in the hall. Rynditch announced their ruling from the platform in a triumphant voice.

“The decision of the committee has been made. The dance will not take place. Nor will the lecture. In any case, it is too late for either. I call upon this audience to leave the hall and the building with absolute calm and in perfect order. If not, the Chekists will intervene.”

Indignant, but powerless, the people began to get up and leave the hall. “Even so,” some muttered, “their party was spoiled ... That wasn’t bad.”

Outside, a new surprise awaited them. At the exit, two armed Chekists searched each person and inspected his identity card. Several were arrested. Some were released next day. But others remained in jail.

I returned to the hotel.

Next morning the telephone rang. Rynditch's voice: "Comrade Voline, come to see me at the committee's office. I want to speak to you about your lecture."

"The date is set for January fifth," I said. "The notices have been ordered. Have you any objection?"

"No, but come anyhow. I must talk with you."

When I got there [Rynditch was not in sight. Instead] I was received by a Bolshevik, amiable and smiling, who said: "Look, Comrade: *The committee has decided that your lecture shall not take place*. You yourself are responsible for this decision, because your attitude yesterday was arrogant and hostile. Also, the committee has decided that you cannot remain in Kursk. For the moment, you will remain here, in our quarters."

"Ah, am I arrested then?"

"Oh no, Comrade. You are not arrested. You will only be kept here for a few hours, until the train leaves for Moscow."

"For Moscow?" I shouted. "But I have absolutely nothing to do in Moscow. And I already have a ticket for Kharkov,[32] where 1 am supposed to go after the Congress here. I have friends and work to do there."

After a short discussion on this point, the Bolshevik said: "That's all right. You can go to Kharkov. But the train doesn't leave until 1 a.m. You'll have to stay here all day."

"Can I go to the hotel and settle my bill and get my valise?"

"No, Comrade. We cannot permit that."

"I promise to go directly to the hotel ... And moreover, someone can accompany me.", "It is impossible, Comrade, we regret. You can see that, he matter might get noised around. We don't want that. The order is formal. Give instructions to one of our comrades. He will go to the hotel and fetch your valise."

An armed Chekist guard already was stationed in front of my room door. I

could do nothing.

A “comrade” brought the valise. Toward midnight another took me in a cab to the railway station and waited until 1 actually departed.

This unexpected journey was made under such painful circumstances that 1 fell sick en route. I was able to avoid pneumonia only because of the kindness of a fellow-passenger who put me up with friends in Soumy, a small Ukrainian city. There a competent doctor took good care of me. And a few days later I was in Kharkov.

On arrival, I wrote for our local weekly, Nabat — forbidden a little later by the Bolshevik authorities because of its growing success — an article entitled *Story of a Lecture Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. In it I related in detail that whole unsavory adventure.

[32] Kharkov is about 150 miles South of Kursk, while Moscow is some 300 miles North of the latter city.

Chapter 7. The Final Settlement

After all that we have said about the nature of State Socialism and its inevitable evolution, the reader will easily understand the reasons which led this "Socialism" into a relentless conflict with the libertarian idea.

For an informed person there is of course nothing surprising or unexpected in the fact that the Socialist power in Russia persecuted Anarchism and Anarchists. This was foreseen by the Anarchists themselves (and as early as Mikhail Bakunin) long before the Russian Revolution, in the event that the latter should become statist and authoritarian.

Repression of the libertarian concept, persecution of its followers, and suppression of the independent movements of the masses: such are the inevitable consequences of the opposition between *the true Revolution* advancing and *the statist principle*, which, momentarily triumphant, does not accept this advance, does not understand the true Revolution, and opposes it.

The new government (if a given revolution has the misfortune to have one), whether it calls itself "revolutionary", "democratic" "Socialist", "proletarian", "Workers' and Peasants'", "Leninist", "Trotskyist", or whatever, is bound to resist the living forces of the true Revolution. This antagonism leads the power, with the same inevitability, to a more and more ruthless struggle, which it must justify with increasing hypocrisy, against the revolutionary forces, and, by this very fact, against the Anarchists, the staunchest spokesmen, supporters, and defenders of the true Revolution and its aspirations.

The triumph of Power in this struggle means, inevitably, the defeat of the Social Revolution, and therefore "automatically" the suppression of the Anarchists. So long as the Revolution and the Anarchist resist, the Socialist authority oppresses them, with mounting effrontery and violence. Monstrous deception and unlimited terror: such are its final arguments, such is the apotheosis of its desperate defense. Then all that is really revolutionary ends by being pitilessly swept away by the so-called "revolutionary" imposture, as being contrary to "the supreme interests of the Revolution" (O cruel irony!), as "criminal", and as "traitorous".

That was what could have been foreseen [in Russia], — in the event that the statist idea triumphed — and what was foreseen by some.

And that is what millions of people will eventually have to understand if

they are to avert [a recurrence of] the failure, the bankruptcy, and the disaster of the Russian Revolution in the next revolution.

At present, as in the time of the Tsars, no libertarian movement, press, or propaganda exists in Russia, and for a long time none has existed. Anarchism is outside the law. The Anarchists there have been exterminated, [isolated, or run out] *to the last man* by all possible and imaginable methods. There are still some, scattered in the prisons and places of exile. But death has wreaked such ravages among them that very few remain alive.

A small number of Russian Anarchists who escaped the killings, banished from their native land or having fled, are in different countries in Western Europe and in the Americas. And if there still are conscious partisans of the libertarian idea in Russia, they are obliged to keep their thoughts to themselves.

The Committee to Aid Imprisoned and Exiled Anarchists in Russia, which functioned for long years in Germany, France, and the United States, collecting funds to send to the victims and publishing information bulletins on the repression, has been compelled to cease all activity, because relations with the few victims still alive have become impossible.

The epic of the extermination of the libertarian movement in Russia, which took place the day after [sic] the “Communist” revolution, is finished. Now it is history, [to which these pages are a contribution].

Most terrible among the aspects of this unique repression is that during it, along with the real Anarchists [who suffered extinction], hundreds of thousands of simple toilers — industrial workers, peasants, and intellectuals — who rose up against the Bolshevik imposture, were likewise annihilated, and *the revolutionary idea itself, and indeed all free thought and action also became “history”* in the land of nascent “Socialism”.

Chapter 8. The Extinguisher

How is it that this frightful “history” is not known abroad? The reader will learn.

From the beginning, and through the years, the Bolshevik “government did its utmost to conceal its hideous deeds from the workers and revolutionaries of other countries, by systematically and brazenly deceiving them, employing the classical methods of silence, lying, and slander.

Its fundamental procedure has been that of all impostors in ail times: after extinguishing an idea and a movement, to extinguish their history as well. The “Soviet” press never has spoken of the struggles that Bolshevism had to wage against the liberty of the Russian people nor the means to which it had to have recourse to win. Nowhere in “Soviet” literature will the reader find the story of these facts. And when the authors of such literature cannot avoid speaking of them, they confine themselves to mentioning, in a few lines, that it was a matter of suppressing counter-revolutionary movements or the exploits of bandits. *Therefore, who is going to verify the facts?*

Another element that has been of great aid to the “Communist” regime in Moscow in the distortion of history is the effective closing of the frontiers. The events of the Russian Revolution unfolded, and are still unfolding, in an enclosed vessel. It has been difficult all along, if not impossible [for anyone not on the actual scene] to know what was happening. The press of the country, wholly governmental, was quiet about everything that had to do with the repression.

When, in the advanced circles of Europe, the question of the persecution of the Anarchists in Russia was raised, a few details of the truth having leaked out despite all restrictive measures, the Bolshevik government declared each time, through the mouths of its representatives and with exceptional aplomb, “What do you mean? The real Anarchists have full freedom in the U.S.S.R. to affirm and propagate their ideas. They even have their clubs and their press.” And since no one was very much interested in the Anarchists and their conceptions, that reply sufficed. It would have required inquiry after inquiry to prove the contrary. *And who thought of doing that?*

Some renegades from Anarchism, patronized by the Bolshevik government, lent it valuable assistance. By way of proof, the regime cited the false statements of these ex-libertarians. Having repudiated their past and seeking to regain their virginity, they confirmed and testified to everything

that was wanted of them.

The Bolsheviki liked also to quote the “tame” [renegades] called “Soviet Anarchists”. These believed it wise and useful to adapt themselves to the situation and to Bolshevism — “in order to be able to do something” prudently, secretly, behind the facade of “loyalty”. This “tactic of protective colorations”, however, could not succeed with the Bolsheviks, themselves familiar with all the techniques of anti-governmental struggle. Closely supervising these “camouflaged” Anarchists, shadowing them constantly, threatening them, and “taming” them adroitly, the authorities ended by using them to justify and even to approve — “momentarily” — all the proceedings of Bolshevism. The recalcitrants were imprisoned or deported. And as for those who truly submitted, they were put on show as “real” Anarchists, who “understand Bolshevism”, in contrast to all the others, who were pictured as “false” Anarchists.

Or the Bolsheviks spoke [with seeming friendliness] of certain Anarchists who remained nearly inactive and who never touched on “sensitive” points. To create an illusion, they were permitted to retain some insignificant organizations, closely supervised. Some of them were authorized to reprint old inoffensive Anarchist works, historical or theoretical. And these “Anarchist publishing houses” were cited to demonstrate that the “real Anarchists” were not touched. Later all such “organizations” likewise were “liquidated”.

Finally, a few extravagant “Anarchist” clowns who distorted Anarchism to the point of caricature were tolerated. The Bolshevik writers did not fail to cite them in order to ridicule the libertarian idea.

Thus the Lenin regime created a facade enabling it to conceal the truth from the Russian masses and from poorly informed people abroad. Subsequently, having made sure of the indifference, the naivete, and the slackness of “advanced” circles in other countries, the Bolsheviki didn’t even bother to hide the truth. For the “advanced people” and the Russian masses would swallow anything!

This deceptive facade also permitted the Bolsheviks to make use of a weapon which, alas, is always effective: slander. On the one hand, they deliberately confused the Anarchists with “counterrevolutionaries”, “criminals”, and “bandits”. On the other hand, they maintained that in the midst of the Revolution the Anarchists could only babble, criticize, “fart around”, put spokes in the wheels of the Revolution, destroy, provoke disorder, and pursue their own selfish interests. [These detractors] pretended that even when the Anarchists wanted to serve the Revolution, they were incapable of achieving anything correctly; that they had “no

positive program"; that they never proposed anything concrete; that they were irresponsible dreamers, who didn't know themselves what they wanted; and that, for all these reasons, the "Soviet" regime was obliged to suppress them; such elements, it held, presented a grave danger in the course of a difficult revolution.

Because no one except those involved knew the truth, and no one else was in a position to examine the facts, this tactic succeeded. It served the Bolshevik government marvelously through the years, and was part of a whole system of deception in which the Bolsheviki were past masters.

All the revelations about their ruthlessness, more and more numerous and precise, in the libertarian press or elsewhere abroad, were methodically and cynically refuted with the same stereotyped arguments. The mass of the workers, the advance-guard intellectuals of all countries, dazzled by the false renown of "the first Socialist republic", accepted all the nonsense of its "genial leaders", and, letting themselves thus be royally "rolled", cared very little about the revelations of the Anarchists. Vanity, fashion, snobbery, and other secondary factors played their parts in this general indifference.

Finally, the most prosaic personal interests also contributed [to the sweeping imposture]. Among others, how many famous writers, in all countries, deliberately closed their eyes to the truth that they know perfectly well. The "Soviet" government had need of their names for publicity purposes. In return, it assured an advantageous market for their works, perhaps the only one. And those poor men carried out this tacit bargain, salving their consciences with the excuses and justifications inspired by their new patrons.

Chapter 9. The Deception of Visiting Delegations

Here we must devote some paragraphs to a special procedure of "skull-stuffing" utilized by the "Soviets" on a vast scale — the systematic deception of foreign workers' delegations.

The facts are clearly known. One of the "clinching arguments" of the Bolsheviks to disprove unfavorable revelations about their administration of the affairs of Russia and its satellites, consists in calling upon the testimony of delegations sent to the U.S.S.R. by organizations, factories, or institutions of various other countries. After a stay of a few weeks in "the land of Socialism" such delegates, almost without exception, have called everything that was said abroad to the discredit of the "Soviet" regime "lies and slanders".

In the beginning the "trick of the delegations" was infallible. Later it lost its efficacy. For some time now it has been almost abandoned. On the one hand, events rushed on and this little game was by-passed. On the other hand, it was finally widely realized in the outside world that under the conditions surrounding their visits, the delegations visiting the "Soviet" Union could not discover the truth at all [about what was happening in that domain], even if they were sincere and impartial.

A strict and fast-moving program, formulated in advance and well regulated, was imposed on them from the moment of their arrival. Knowing neither the language, nor the customs, nor the real life of the population, they were "assisted", which actually meant *manipulated*, by the governmental guides and interpreters. They were shown what the "Communist" government wanted them to see, and were told what it wanted them to believe. And the visitors had no means of approaching the population to study its way of living objectively and exhaustively.

All that is now more or less accepted [by workers' organizations and interested individuals in the democratic countries].

But it is pertinent to record here another fact apropos of that situation which still remains unknown to the public and which says a great deal about the state of things in the U.S.S.R.

The Committee to Aid Imprisoned and Exiled Anarchists in Russia, some Syndicalist organizations, and some well-known militant individuals, among them the late lamented Erich Muhsarn of Germany and Sebastien

Faure of France, repeatedly proposed to the Bolshevik government that it allow *a real delegation* to enter Russia — a delegation constituted in complete independence and composed of militants of differing tendencies, including “Communists”.

With that proposal its sponsors submitted the following conditions to the “Soviet” government: 1. Free and unlimited stay, until the delegation itself considers its mission completed; 2. Freedom [and facilities], to go anywhere that the delegation may deem indispensable to the interests of its mission, including prisons, places of exile, et cetera; 3. The right to publish the facts, impressions, and conclusions of the delegation in the advance-guard press abroad; 4. An interpreter chosen by the delegation itself.

Obviously it would have been entirely to the interest of the Bolshevik regime to accept such a proposal — if it was sincere, if it had nothing to hide, if it was not concealing unadmissible truths. A favourable report on the “Soviet” Russian scene by such a delegation would have put an end to all equivocation. Any [real] Socialist government, any “Workers’ and Peasants’ government” (supposing for the moment that such could exist) would have received that kind of delegation with open arms. It even would have wished for it, suggested, requested it. The testimony and approval of a delegation making its observations under the indicated circumstances would have been decisive, irresistible, irrefutable.

But that offer was never accepted. The “Soviet” government turned a deaf ear to it every time.

The reader should reflect well upon this fact. For *the disapproval of such a delegation also would have been irresistible and definitive.* The results of the proposed inquiry would have been catastrophic for the good name of the “Soviet” regime, for its whole system, for its whole cause.

But no one abroad budged. The grave-diggers of the Revolution could sleep quite soundly and ignore the attempts to make them admit the terrible truth: the failure of the Revolution as an outcome of their methods. The blind and the bought of all countries marched with them.

Revealing the truth [about these things] — unknown, we are sure, to almost all of our non-Anarchist readers — we are fulfilling an imperative duty. Not only because the truth must some day appeapjn all its effulgence, but also — and especially — because this truth will render an inestimable service to everyone who wants to be informed, who is sick of being eternally the dupe of criminal impostors, and who, finally, strengthened by the truth, can act in the future with full knowledge of the situation.

The story of the repression in the U.S.S.R. is not only suggestive and revealing in itself; it is still an excellent means of making known *the fundamentals, the concealed "underside", the true nature of authoritarian Communism.*

In this respect, we have only one regret — that of being able to tell this story only in an incomplete way.

Let us cite one more recent example, which illustrates effectively the manner in which the Bolshcviki and their servitors deceive everyone.

This pertains to a work by a certain Emilian Yaroslavsky, a notorious Bolshevik: a book entitled *History of Anarchism in Russia*, which appeared in 1937, in Spanish and in French, for the purpose of counteracting the eventual success of the libertarian idea in Spain and elsewhere

We brush aside the fantastic "information" on the origins of Anarchism, on Bakunin, on Anarchism in Russia before 1917, and on the attitude of the Anarchists toward the war that began in Europe in 1914. A reply to these myths perhaps will appear one day in the specifically Anarchist press. What interests us particularly here are the descriptions, in that volume, of the *libertarian movement in the course of the Revolution of 1917*.

Yaroslavsky takes care not to speak of *the real Anarchist movement*. He tarries long over fringe movements which had nothing to do with Anarchism. He is much concerned with Anarchist groups, publications, and activities of secondary importance. Carefully he notes the weak points and malignantly shows the deficiencies in order to feed his bad faith. And he lingers especially with the "remnants" of the movement: with those unfortunate "remains" which, after the liquidation of the bona fide libertarian organizations, desperately and vainly knocked themselves out in their efforts to maintain some appearance of action.

Those remnants were the lamentable and impotent waste of the former Anarchist movement that had been extinguished. Henceforth they could not do anything serious or positive. Their semi-clandestine "activity", supervised and impeded, was not at all characteristic of the libertarian movement in Russia. And in all countries, and in all periods, these left-over pieces of organizations which had been destroyed by the force of the State, subsequently dragged out a sterile and pointless existence until they were completely exhausted. Deviations, inconsequentialities, splits, inevitably occupied their whole semblances of life, for which of course they can hardly be reproached, since all possibility of healthy activity had been taken away from them.

It is about this debris that Yaroslavsky tells us, while pretending to speak of the real Anarchist movement. He mentions the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union of Petrograd and its journal, *Golos Truda*, only once, in passing, and then only because he finds something about it to falsify. He speaks neither of the Moscow Federation nor of the periodical *Anarchy*. And when he devotes a few lines to the Ukrainian *Nabat*, it is also to distort the facts.

If this author had been honest, he would have dwelt primarily on those three organizations and quoted their press. But he knows very well that such impartiality would ruin his assertions, and thus be contrary to the whole purpose of this work. And he omits everything which incontestably would prove the serious basis, positive meaning, and influence of the Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist movement in Russia during the 1917 Revolution.

Yaroslavsky does not breathe a word about the persecutions, the repression, the violent suppression of that movement. For if he told the truth about those onslaughts it would wreck his lying thesis. According to him, the Anarchists, in 1917, were “against the Socialist and proletarian Revolution”. His contention is that the libertarian movement extinguished itself, by reason of its unpopularity and its impotence.

The reader knows that this version is exactly the opposite of the truth. It was precisely because that movement evolved and grew quickly in Russia, winning support and widening its influence, that the Bolsheviks hastened to stamp it out in the seed, by means of the most commonplace violence, by the brutal intervention of their soldiers and police.

But if Yaroslavsky admitted the truth, he would upset the whole structure of his book. So he lies, confident of the ignorance of his readers, and of the absence of any contradiction.

If I have permitted myself to linger over this example, it is because that manner of presenting things is typical of “Soviet” propaganda. All the Bolsheviks’ workers on Anarchism in Russia proceed exactly in the same way and are as alike as drops of water. The order comes from above. The Bolshevik “historians” and “writers” have only to follow it. It is necessary to destroy the libertarian idea at all costs. It is a work done to order and well paid. It has nothing to do with the historical truth which we are now in the process of revealing.

Chapter 10. Bolshevik “Justice”

It remains for us to cast a quick glance at the administrative and judiciary procedures of the Bolshevik regime during that period.

Moreover, these procedures, essentially, have hardly changed at all. If, in our days, they are less frequently employed, it is because all those who were subjected to them in the past have been exterminated. But still, fairly recently, the same principles and measures have been applied to the “Trotskyists”, to the anti-Stalinist old Bolsheviks, to functionaries fallen into disgrace: officers, policemen, and others.

As we have stated, there exists in Russia a political police system which works in secret, which has the right to arrest people secretly, without any formal arraignment, to try them secretly without witnesses or lawyers, to condemn them secretly to various penalties, including death, or to renew their detention or exile for as long as it may see fit.

This is a cardinal point. The hateful regimen applied to prisoners and exiles — we will insist upon this statement despite all the denials by foreign “delegates” deceived or bought — is only an aggravated circumstance. Even if the life in the Russian prisons had the humanitarian character ascribed to it by the officials and their acolytes, it would not be any less true that honest workers could be arbitrarily removed [from their homes or jobs], thrown into prison, and deprived of the right to struggle for their cause, simply on the simple decision of some functionaries.

During the period with which we are especially concerned, that omnipotent police force was called the Cheka, an abbreviation of its complete Russian name: *Chrezvytchainaya Kommissia*, Extraordinary Commission. The *Cheka* was established at the end of 1917, on Lenin’s initiative, by a nucleus of Communist militants who had proven themselves in the struggle against Tsarism and enjoyed the unlimited confidence of the central committee of the Russian Communist Party.

At that time the Communists justified the existence of this institution and the special features of its functioning by [pointing to] the necessity of acting swiftly against the numerous plots [so they alleged] threatening the Revolution. Later this argument lost Us value. The Cheka could no longer use it. For a new problem had to be dealt with — that of defending the Power against the Revolution.

In 1923 the change of the secret police force’s title to that of G.P.U., also

an abbreviation, altered only a few aspects of its practices. And subsequently nothing was changed, except the individuals at the top. The names of three are fairly well known abroad — Djerzinsky, creator and animator of the *Cheka*, who died suddenly, or who, according to some, was executed while on duty by order of Stalin; Yagoda, executed as a result of a famous “trial”; and Yejov, his successor, who mysteriously disappeared.

The *Cheka* never issued reports on its activities, neither to the workers at large, nor to their “representatives”. Those activities were always pursued with the greatest mystery. Information was supplied to the *Cheka* by a vast network of secret agents, of which a sizeable part was recruited from the former Tsarist police. And the *Cheka* also took advantage of the duty imposed on all Communists to help the “revolutionary” police by giving information, denunciations, et cetera.

The despotism, the abuses, the crimes perpetrated in the dungeons of the surpasses all imagination. We cannot take time to enumerate them here; this particular subject deserves a volume by itself. The future historian will be horrified when the archives are opened and give forth their terrible human documentation. Readers will find edifying examples in certain available books.

In that period, tribunals and public trials for political cases did not exist. Even today such trials are exceptional. Then the *Cheka* conducted them exclusively.

As a rule, arrests were without appeal. And [at first] the sentences were not published. Later, occasionally, in a few lines, limited mention of oral trials before the police was made in the press. These references showed only that a case had been put on the calendar and that a given sentence was imposed. Reasons for the sentence were never stated.

Sentences were carried out by the *Cheka* itself. If the verdict was death, the prisoner was taken from his cell, and usually executed by a revolver bullet in the back of the neck at the moment when, followed by a *Chekist* executioner, he was descending the last step of a staircase leading to the cellar. Then the body was buried secretly. It was never returned to the prisoner’s relatives. Frequently the latter heard of the execution of their kin only indirectly — by the refusal of the prison administration to receive food that they? brought for him. The classic phrase was of gem-like simplicity : “So-and-so no longer appears on the prison records.” This could mean transfer to another prison or exile. If it was death, the formula was the same. No other explanation was permitted. It was up to the relatives to make enquiries elsewhere to learn exactly what had happened.

Exile always administrative, meant deportation to the most distant and barren parts of the vast country: either to the warm and marshy regions, extremely unhealthy, in Turkestan, or to the extreme North, in the terrible regions of Narym or Turukhansk. Often enough the Government "amused itself" by sending exiles first to Turkestan and then suddenly transferring them to the far North, or *vice versa*. It was an indirect but certain way of sending them into the other world.

The correspondence between the Aid Committee and the libertarians exiled to the North revealed the physical and moral horror of the "life" of these victims. Arriving at their destination, they were henceforth isolated from the world. Such destinations, in several instances, were forgotten towns and villages whose inhabitants lived by hunting or fishing. *Mail came only once or twice a year.* Hundreds of these settlements comprised only four or five huts lost in a desert of ice and snow.

Those exiles suffered all the illnesses of malnutrition, cold, and inactivity — scurvy, tuberculosis, heart and stomach diseases. Life was a slow torture and death came as a deliverance.

The prisons where the libertarians, the Syndicalists, the "oppositionists", the simple workers, peasants, or other citizens who had rebelled or were merely suspects, were confined, were never visited by the foreign delegations. Such visiting groups usually were conducted through Sokolniki, Lefortovo, and certain sections of Butyrki — that is, they were taken to the Moscow prisons where the counter-revolutionaries, speculators, and common-law prisoners were kept. Sometimes these were persuaded to call themselves "political prisoners" and to praise the prison administration by promises of a reduction of their sentences.

Some delegations were allowed to visit the prison for Social Democrats in Tiflis, in the Caucasus. But certain other prisons were never visited by foreign delegations or individual travelers — notably, the camp at Solovki, often mentioned in the foreign press, but remaining mysterious; the Suzdal prison (a former monastery, transformed), the "political isolator" of Verkhne-Urals, that of Tobolsk, or that of Yaroslav. One could add numerous prisons and many concentration camps scattered throughout the country. All have remained totally unknown to the naive, or the interested, who [were led] to give, on their return from a "study" trip in "the first Socialist nation", favorable reports on "the new prison regime created by the U.S.S.R.".

And Romain Rolland says that he was able to discover the existence of administrative justice in "Soviet" Russia.

The unleashed repression, the violence against the people, the terror — these made up the crown of the Bolsheviks' work, of their "soviet" regime.

To justify all this horror, they invoked the interests of the Revolution. But nothing could have been more false, more hypocritical, than this attempted justification.

The Anarchists have been exterminated in Russia, they can exist there no longer, simply because they defended the very principles of the Social Revolution, because they struggle for the real economic, political, and social freedom of the people.

The revolutionaries in general, and hundreds of thousands of workers, have been annihilated in Russia by a new authority and by a new privileged caste, which, like all authorities and all privileged castes in the world, have nothing of the revolutionary spirit, and maintain themselves in power only by the thirst to dominate and exploit in their turn. Their system is supported by ruse and violence, like any authoritarian and statist system — necessarily dominator, exploiter, and oppressor.

The "Communist" statist regime is only a variety of the Fascist regime. It is high time that the workers of all countries understood this, that they reflect upon it, and that they learn profitable lessons from this terrible negative experience.

Moreover, current events are contributing powerfully to this result, and coming events will contribute further to them. As I write these lines, in December, 1939, Bolshevism finally is in the process of going outside of its frontiers, out of its Russian "cage". One will see it at work in due time. I have not the slightest doubt of the nature of the final judgement.

These events will contribute equally, I hope, to a better understanding of the present work and its revelations. And I also hope that this book will enable the reading public to understand certain facts better.

Among other things, it is in the light of these revelations that one can understand the rise of Josef Stalin. As a matter of fact, Stalin did not "fall from the moon". Stalin and "Stalinism" are simply the logical consequences of a preliminary and preparatory evolution, itself the result of a terrible mistake, of an evil deviation of the Revolution.

It was Lenin and Trotsky — that is to say, their system — which prepared the ground for and gave rise to Stalin.

To all those who, having supported Lenin, Trotsky, and their colleagues, today fulminate against Stalin, it must be said: They reap what they sowed!

It is true that logic is not the province of everyone. But let them correct their aim at least, before it is too late.

Fifteen years ago an Anarchist in touch with the facts, wrote certain words — fine, vigorous, and just. These:

> Here are the facts which demonstrate the eternal authoritarian monstrosity. May they make recoil in horror those who venture blindly into the way of dictatorship, whether it be in the name of the vast sublime ideal, or the most logical formula of sociology. May they especially, on the eve of events which might lead to a revolutionary situation, be impelled to take all precautions, not only to avoid the traps in which the Russian Anarchists were caught and slaughtered, but also be capable, in the revolutionary hours, of opposing practical conceptions of production and distribution of goods to those of the Communist dictators.

Later, a little before his death, the Anarchist convictions of the man who wrote those words gave way. In a moment of madness, he approved of Bolshevism.

Happily, if *men*, generally weak and inconsequential beings bend, deform themselves, and pass away, *the truths*, which they formerly proclaimed, *remain*.

Part V. The Bolshevik State

Chapter 1. Nature of the Bolshevik State

By the end of 1921, the Communist power felt itself completely master of the situation. At least it could consider itself safe from any immediate danger. Its enemies and opponents, both external and internal, and of both the right and the left, were now no longer able to combat it.

From 1922 onward, it could devote itself entirely to dotting its i's and crossing its t's and consolidating its State.

On the one hand the present Russian State is, in its fundamental aspects, a logical development of what was founded and established in 1918–1921. The subsequent modifications were merely repairs, or the completion of details. We will specify them as they come up.

The Bolshevist State has now existed for 20 years.

What exactly is the nature of that State?

What are its bases, its structure, its essential elements?

It is called the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, for which the abbreviation is U.S.S.R. It pretends to be a "proletarian" or "workers' and peasants' " State. It claims to exercise a "dictatorship of the proletariat". It flatters itself as being "the Workers' Fatherland" and the rampart of Socialism and the Revolution.

How much of this is true? Do the facts and the actions of that State justify these declarations and pretensions?

A rapid examination of the Bolshevik picture will enable an adequate reply to this question.

I say rapid examination. In fact, a detailed and more or Itss complete study of the prevailing Russian State would call for a volume in itself. That is not the purpose of the present work. And after what has gone before in these pages, a general glance will suffice. We will assemble and complete what we have begun.

At this point I want to apprise the uninitiated reader that there now exists in France a rich literature in the form of books, pamphlets, and magazine and newspaper articles which give a fairly exact idea of the structure, functioning, and spirit of this "Soviet" State.[33] Through several years numerous works have appeared which show clearly the true character of

that State, the real nature of its government, the situation of the laboring masses there, the precise condition of the economy of the U.S.S.R., its culture, and other aspects. These works bring to light the back-stage aspect and the hidden underside of the Bolshevik regime, its mistakes, its “secret illnesses”.

To be sure, the authors of this literature did not seek to get to the bottom of the problem, to reveal *the causes and the consequences* of the “Soviet” State’s decline. They make no mention of that “other flame”, the libertarian idea, its role, and its fate, in the Russian Revolution. To them, as to so many other countries, that is all unexplored territory. They do not offer any solution. But they give the facts sincerely. Thus they make known the false route taken by the “Communist” government since the Revolution, and prove irrefutably its bankruptcy.

Generally these studies provide an abundant and precise documentation.

Here, however, we will confine ourselves to a general “view of the whole”. This will be sufficient for our immediate purpose. For it is the general character of this State which especially interests us, to the extent that it illuminates events during and after the Revolution.

We have said earlier that the primary concern of the Bolshevik Party in power was to nationalize all the activity and all the life of Russia, in fact, everything that could be nationalized. It was a question of creating a regime which in modern terminology is called *totalitarian*.

Once in possession of an adequate coercive force, the party and the Government employed it to the utmost in performing this task. And it was specifically to this end that the “Communist” power created its immense bureaucratic apparatus. It ended by forming a widespread and powerful caste of “responsible” functionaries, which today constitutes a highly privileged stratum of some 2,000,000 individuals. Effective mistress of the country, the Army, and the police, that caste supports, protects, venerates, and flatters Stalin, its idol, its “Tsar”, the only man considered capable of maintaining “order” in the U.S.S.R., and of safeguarding its privileges.

Little by little the Bolsheviki nationalized, monopolized, “totalitarianized”, easily and quickly, the whole Russian administration, the organizations of industrial workers, peasants, and others; finance; the means of transport; the sub-soil and mining, external commerce and heavy internal commerce, big industry, and land and agriculture, teaching, education, and culture in general, the press and literature, art, science, sport, recreation, and even thought, or at least all of its manifestations.

Nationalization of the workers' organizations in Russia — Soviets, unions, shop committees, and other groups — was the easiest and the most rapid. Their independence was abolished. They simply became administrative and executive cogs of the party and the Government.

The Bolshevik Party was led skilfully. The workers did not even realize that they were in the process of being hamstrung. Inasmuch as the State and the Government were now "theirs", it seemed natural to them not to detach themselves from it. They regarded it as normal that their organizations should fulfil functions in the "workers'" State and carry out the decisions of the "comrade commissars".

Soon no autonomous act, no free gesture, by those organizations was permitted. They ended by becoming aware of their error. But then it was too late. When certain workers' organizations, impeded in their actions and restless, feeling that "something was wrong in the Soviet realm", began to show discontent and sought to regain a little independence, the Government opposed them with all its energy and all its trickery. In the first place, it immediately imposed penalties. In the second, it tried to reason with the discontented ones.

"Since," it said to the workers, with the most natural manner in the world, "we now have a workers' State in which the workers exercise their own dictatorship and in which everything belongs to them, *this State and its organs are yours*. Then of what "independence" can there be a question? Such demands are nonsense. *Independence from what? From whom? From yourselves?* Since the State now is you!

"Not to understand this means not to understand the Revolution that has been accomplished. To oppose this state of things means to oppose the Revolution itself. Such ideas and movements cannot be tolerated, for they can be inspired only by enemies of the Revolution, of the working class, of its State, its dictatorship, and of the workers' power. Those among you who are still ignorant enough to listen to the whispering of these enemies and who lend an ear to their wicked suggestions because everything is not yet perfect in your young State, are committing a veritable counter-revolutionary act."

Needless to say, all those who persisted in protesting and in demanding some independence were pitilessly crushed.

The most difficult thing to achieve was the complete appropriation of the land, and the suppression of the individual cultivator. As we know, it was Stalin who effected this transformation some years ago. Periodically the situation again grows serious and complicated. The struggle between the

State and the mass of peasants continues under new forms.

Inasmuch as everything that is indispensable to the labor and activity of man — in other words, everything that is, in the largest sense of the term, capital — belongs to the State in Russia, that country is an example of integral State capitalism. State capitalism : such is the economic, financial, social, and political system of the U.S.S.R., with all of its logical consequences and manifestations in all spheres of life — material, moral, and spiritual.

The correct designation of this State should not be U.S.S.R., but U.S.C.R., meaning Union of State Capitalist Republics.

Economically, this means that *the State is the only real owner* of all the riches of the country, of the whole “national inheritance”, of all that is indispensable for millions of men and women to live, work, and act. This includes, we must emphasize, all gold, all money-capital, both national and foreign.

This is the most important thing. It must be understood before all else. The rest follows.

[33] This was written in 1939.

Chapter 2. Situation of the Workers

Socially, the basis of the system in the domain ruled by Stalin lies in the following facts:

As in all other countries, *the worker in the U.S.S.R. is an employee. But he is a State employee. The State is his only employer.* Instead of having thousands of "choices", as is the case in the nations where private capitalism prevails, in the U.S.S.R. (the U.S.C.R.) the worker has only one. Any change of employer is impossible there.

It is pretended that, this State being a "Workers' State", it is not an employer in the usual sense of the word. The profits it realizes from production of commodities do not go into the pockets of capitalists, [so the Stalin regime asserts], but in the last analysis, serve the interests of the workers, returning to them in forms other than money.

Subtle as it may sound, this reasoning is purely theoretical. The "workers' State" is not directed[34] by the workers themselves, (workers can direct production themselves only in an entirely different social system, never in a modern centralized State), but by a very large stratum of functionaries in the pay of the Government, which itself forms the center of a solid group, detached from the masses of toilers, and acting on its own. It is said that it is "answerable" to the workers. This is another abstraction. The reality has nothing in common with the formulas.

Ask any worker in the U.S.S.R. — if he be a simple, real worker — in what form he gets any advantage out of the profits realized by the State above his wages. He won't even understand you; he knows nothing about it. The only thing he knows is that he gets his meager wage, always inadequate, and that he has all the difficulty in the world in subsisting on it. He knows also that there are many people in the "Soviet" Union who live "agreeably" (as Stalin has said), richly, luxuriously.

Ask him if he can bring pressure to bear on those who are purportedly "answerable" to the workers, if he can criticize them, call them to order, eliminate them, replace them. He will understand you still less. What he knows is that he has only to carry out the orders of his chiefs "who know what they are doing", and that the least criticism of them would cost him dearly. Those chiefs are imposed on him by the Government and are answerable only to it. As for the Government, it is infallible, and unassailable : its answerability is a myth.

Let us see a little of the real situation of the worker in the U.S.S.R. Does it differ essentially from that of the workers in the countries where private capitalism flourishes?

As everywhere else, the worker in Stalin's domain is obliged to present himself, on payday, at the paymaster's window in the establishment where he is employed, to get his wages. These wages are paid to him by a functionary, the paymaster of his only boss, the State.

That functionary makes up his payroll according to the wage scale decreed by the Government. He withholds from the wages whatever the State-employer considers it necessary to withhold: so much for Red Aid, so much for bonds ("free", but compulsory, a Soviet sophism), so much for foreign propaganda, so much for the national lottery (another "free" but compulsory institution). He pays the worker exactly as does any other paymaster, employed in any other shop in any other country. Naturally the workers in the U.S.S.R. have no knowledge of what the State gains from his wages, nor what the State does with those gains. "That's the Government's business", and the worker hasn't the slightest intention of getting mixed up with that problem.

But in a country where private capitalism prevails, the worker, if he is dissatisfied, can quit his employer and look for another. He can change his shop, go where he likes, do what he pleases.

All this is impossible in the U.S.S.R.. where there is only one employer, owner of all the factories. Conforming to the latest laws, the worker hasn't even the right to "ask for his time" and quit the factory where he is employed, on his own. For that he must have the authorization of the management. And this management is made up of functionaries who, for a long time, have replaced the factory committees. Thus the worker is attached to his place of work in the manner of a serf or a slave.[35]

If the Russian worker leaves a factory without a special authorization written on his compulsory identity card, or if he is fired, he cannot work anywhere else without re-authorization. No factory director, functionary of the same State-employer, can hire him, under pain of severe penalties.

Under these conditions, the State-employer can do with the worker what it likes. It treats him like a slave. The worker is obliged to accept everything that is thrust upon him: he has neither a choice of employer, nor means of defense (his labor union being in the hands of the government-employer and pretending not to understand that a union member can defend himself "against his own government"), nor any way of existing except at the end of his tether. Unless he "untangles" himself somehow.

And he cannot complain nor make himself heard, the press also being in the hands of "his government", speech belonging to it, and meetings not being permitted except on official order. In a country as large as Russia, the best method of "getting untangled" has always been vagabondage. This practice has not changed. Thousands and thousands of ex-workers there, having quit their jobs "irregularly", and finding themselves on the outs with the authorities, have revived the old tradition and have taken to the roads. They form a significant mass of unemployed of which the Soviet press naturally does not speak.

The laws in the U.S.S.R. concerning workers in general and factory work in particular are extremely harsh. Tens of thousands of toilers languish and perish in the prisons and places of exile for the sole reason of having broken them.

And the work is difficult. — Except in the large centers, the hygienic conditions in the shops are deplorable, the general surroundings impoverished. Nearly everywhere, too, there is hard labor at piece-work and the Taylor system is applied.

Prevalence of "*stakhanovism*" throughout the Soviet Union testifies to this. (The reader will find other testimonies and irrefutable proofs of what we say about labor conditions there in various other works.[36])

The truth about *stakhanovism* is not well enough known outside of the Russian domain. That term comes from the name of a miner, Alexei Stakhanov, chosen by the Bolshevik authorities for the purpose of a vast campaign to intensify the output of the workers. It was a question, for the magnates of "Soviet" neo-capitalism of applying in the U.S.S.R. the principle of the Taylor system [gleaned from the United States] without using the term and without the appearance of its having been instigated by the Government.

One day Stakhanov made, spontaneously, it was asserted, a sensational declaration to his bosses, claiming that he had discovered a new principle of organizing the work of mining coal which enabled the increasing of production by x times. Immediately the Government "became interested" in the discovery, found it useful, made a big stir about it, and undertook a far-flung campaign to introduce the new method everywhere in Russia.

In fact, however, Stakhanov, inspired and pushed by the Bolshevik Party, had only "discovered" America. His "new" method was only an old device which had just made its first appearance across the Atlantic: to be specific, *the assembly line* [the speed-up, as used in the Ford automobile and other industrial plants] adapted to Russian conditions. But the "stage setting"

[given to Stakhanov's prodigious daily output of coal] and the far-reaching publicity which it got made of it an extraordinary and fortunate discovery. The boneheads and the simpletons abroad took it all very seriously.

That "discovery" became the special business of the State-employer. It permitted it to hope for a general raising of the workers' output. Then it impelled the Government to form a privileged stratum among the workers, a formation which was exceedingly helpful to governmental need for heightened production — the privileged ones being, generally, competent leaders of men, and thus could be used to facilitate manipulation of the toiling masses. And finally, in certain circles, it enhanced the prestige of the government-employer.

The new efficiency system was inaugurated by means of intense publicity in the press, on posters, and in speeches at public meetings. Stakhanov was proclaimed a "hero of labor", rewarded, decorated. His system was applied in other branches of industry. Everywhere jealous "rivals" set about imitating him and even surpassing his output. All these individuals were ambitious to distinguish themselves, to "rise from the ranks", to "arrive" — naturally to the detriment of the workers as a whole, they being forced to submit to a new speed-up, that is, to increased exploitation, under the supervision of the "heroes". The latter rose on the backs of the others. They obtained advantages and privileges to the extent that they succeeded in applying the system and dragging along the masses. The "emulation" of the *stakhanovists* among themselves accordingly gave rise to *superstakhanovism*.

Soon the mass of workers understood the real meaning of the innovation. Powerless to oppose this "super-exploitation by any general movement, they manifested their discontent by numerous acts of sabotage and vengeance, even going so far as to assassinate over-zealous stakhanovists. It became necessary for the government to resort to extremely severe measures to repress the anti-stakhanovist movement. Moreover, the enterprise shortly ended in nothing. Once the bluff was seen through, all that remained was a sort of workers' opportunism which no longer played a really effective role in production.

The "nationalized" worker in the U.S.S.R. is at least in principle a *modern* slave. *On condition of being docile and zealous, he is fairly well maintained*, insured by his "lord", rewarded with a paid vacation, et cetera. Nevertheless this, in reality, is a matter here of only a tightly restricted part of the working class. That class is divided into several categories. The difference in their conditions of life ranges from ease to poverty, through all intermediary stages. The favors go only to the workers "worthy of them". To be well-paid, to have vacations and other advantages it is necessary to deserve them, to detach oneself from the crowd, to "climb".

The overwhelming majority of the workers in the Soviet Union endure a miserable existence — especially the unskilled, the day-laborers, the domestics, the small employees, and, in general, the mass of average workers. Others, skilled and specialized, privileged slaves, have a relatively "good" life, and form a sort of "workers' aristocracy".

Most frequently, the latter distrust and repulse their unfortunate class comrades. The struggle for existence is bitter in the U.S.S.R. So much the worse for the victims. Let them take care of themselves. If one concerns himself with them, he soon becomes a victim himself. But the skilled and privileged worker, the true *stakhanovist* — worthy disciple of the famous Stakhanov, first worker-careerist — is ambitious for higher and higher positions. He has hopes of rising, some day, out of the ranks of the slaves, to become himself a functionary, some kind of a chief, perhaps a director.

He must do everything possible to rise He demeans himself; he does four men's work; he trains the youths who will replace him in the shop; he makes himself noticed everywhere he can; he is always in agreement with the authorities and he emphasizes that; he is a candidate for the Party; he flatters and curries favor here, he covers himself there. But, ahead of everything else, it is necessary that he never become involved with those below him, nor with those on his own level. The struggle is hard in the Soviet Union.

The *stakhanovist* workers are primarily "*pace-setters*", whose role is to demonstrate by example to the mass of workers that it is possible to intensify production. They are highly paid and are given advancements, especially the superstakhanovists, who are the "aces" of *stakhanovism*. Their role is to show the proletarian masses that if they work well they can "attain" a comfortable and even "agreeable" life. (Again, Stalin's word).

In the majority of instances, once a new output-record has been established in a factory, it is impossible for a stakhanovist to remain there; the other workers will not let him live. Generally the authorities take care of such a faithful servant. Usually he is sent to a sanitarium, where he sojourns "comfortably" for several months — after which he is called to an administrative post in Moscow or some other large city, where he has a stylish villa at his disposal and where he lives an "agreeable" life, getting a salary and enjoying prerogatives in proportion to the services he has rendered. His career is made. He is now a functionary. He has risen from the ranks. He has "arrived".

By all such procedures — *stakhanovism, superstakhanovism*, classification in various categories of wages, et cetera — the "Communist" government manages effectively to divide and control the working masses. It creates, at

the same time, a privileged stratum which is obsequiously devoted to it, which keeps the “herd” on the alert, and which serves as a buffer between the masters and the slaves.

Thus the practices employed by the new masters — the “Communists” — toward the working class remain what they always were: to divide and dominate. And the consoling word spoken by the master to the “herd” also is eternal: “Workers, do you want to get ahead? Well, that depends solely on yourselves, for any capable man, who is diligent and applies himself, can become ‘someone’. Those who do not succeed, the failures, have only themselves to blame.”

According to the meticulous and objective calculations of the economist E. Yurievsky, *taken from the statistics of the Government of the U.S.S.R.*, out of some 18,000,000 workers in 1938, there were about 1,500,000 (8 per cent.) of ex-workers and privileged workers: *stakhanovists* and *superstakhanovists*, et al.

It is of course understandable that the Government should encourage and reward this careerism from which it gains such huge profits and which, incidentally, it never calls by that name. Instead the competition in speed-up is lauded as “noble emulation”, “honorable zeal in the service of the proletariat”, and the like. There is a decoration “for zeal”. And there is even a whole stratum of “decorated workers” — *ordenonostsi*. From the most “worthy” of these elements, the Government creates a sort of new “Soviet” nobility, and also a new State-capitalist bourgeoisie: determined and solid supporters of the regime in the Kremlin.

And it is to all such climbers that Stalin, their supreme chief, refers, when he says in some of his speeches: “Life among us becomes always more agreeable, more cheerful.”

The herd in the Soviet Union remains the herd, as everywhere else. And as elsewhere, the Government possesses “sufficient means to keep it at its mercy, tranquil and subdued”.

It is contended that its methods prepare the ground for “real Communism”.

We have asked ourselves whether the lot of the worker in the U.S.S.R. is preferable to that of the worker in the countries where private capitalism continues. But the real problem is not that. It is more precisely this: Is such a state of affairs compatible with Socialism? Or is this, at least, the dawn of it? Can such an organization, such a social background, lead us there?

The reader is invited to answer these questions himself — and others as

well — when he reaches the end of this book.

[34] Naturally I employ the term “direct” in the sense of *organizing*, and of *administration* (a social term), and not in that of *governing* (a political term). A government, even if it were composed of workers (which is not the case in the U.S.S.R.) could serve only the interests of a privileged class which inevitably develops into a statist political system.

[35] The reader should not suspect me of preferring private capitalism. I state a fact, nothing more. It is evident that freedom to choose an employer is a small thing. But to live and work under the eternal threat of losing the only exploiter possible is not pleasant. This threat, suspended constantly over the head of the worker in the U.S.S.R., makes him a slave. That is all I meant to say.

[36] See, for instance, *Workers Before and After Lenin*, by Manya Gordon; New York: Dutton, 1941.

Chapter 3. Situation of the Peasants

Four successive periods must be distinguished.

At first, seeking to gain and consolidate the sympathies of Russia's vast laboring masses and the Army, the Bolshevik government practiced a "*laissez faire*" policy toward the peasants. And the peasants — as the reader knows — began to take the land, the landlords either being in flight or having been driven out long before the October Revolution. The Lenin regime had only to approve this state of affairs.[37]

"By themselves, the soldiers stopped the war, while the peasants took over the land and the workers the factories," we are told by Paul Milioukov, well-known Russian historian and writer, and ex-Foreign Minister of the first provisional government. "Lenin had only to sanction the accomplished fact to make sure of the sympathies of the soldiers, the peasants, and the workers."[38]

There is much truth in this statement of the bourgeois leader, although he is wrong not to take any notice of the influence of the activity and propaganda of the revolutionists. With this reservation, his testimony is particularly interesting. Milioukov always was a keen observer and interpreter of Russian life. He held a post which permitted him to obtain sound information. Finally, he had no reason to diminish the role of the Bolsheviks. (We should note in passing that this testimony is very suggestive, not only in regard to the worker and peasant problem during the war, but also to the problem of war).

Notice [is pertinent here] to all who, intentionally or through ignorance, contend that the Revolution was achieved, not by the masses, but by the Bolsheviki. Here is a point to underline: That fundamentally, *the October Revolution*, like the one in February, *was accomplished by the masses*, of course with the help and sup. port of revolutionists of all schools. The masses were ready f0r the new revolution; they achieved it from day to day, everywhere at the moment. That is what is important; that is what it means to "accomplish a revolution". As for the Bolsheviks, they performed a purely political act in taking power. *That inevitably had to occur in the course of this popular revolution on the march.* By their political act, the Bolsheviki stopped the real Revolution, and caused its deviation.

They claim that if they had not taken power, the counterrevolution would have regained control and the Revolution would have been defeated. That assertion is gratuitous. The Bolsheviks were able to seize power *because the*

vast masses were for the Revolution. The "masses" mainly were the [industrial] workers, the peasants, and the soldiers. With the workers taking over the factories, the peasants seizing the land, the revolutionaries helping both, and the soldiers being partisans of the Revolution, what [possible] force — without industry, without funds, without help, and without an army — could have stopped it? Foreign intervention? Who knows what would have been the situation and the attitude in other countries if the Russian Revolution had taken the course visualized by the Anarchists? Who knows what the consequences would have been? At that moment, the two theses should have been debated publicly. The Bolsheviks preferred to suppress the other, and the world has been suffering the consequences for a quarter of a century.

The statement [by Miloukov], among others, confirms the fundamental thesis of the Anarchists. They had maintained, in fact, that when the essential and favorable conditions would come into being, the masses would be perfectly capable of achieving the Revolution themselves, with the aid and support of the revolutionaries. They add (and this is the essential point of their outlook) that after the victory, the Revolution should follow the same course — free action of the masses, supported by the free action of the revolutionaries of all schools, without any political party, having eliminated the others, installing itself in power, imposing its dictatorship, and monopolizing the Revolution.

Therefore, in the beginning — *in the first period* — Lenin did not bother the peasants. It was for this reason, among others, that the latter supported him, thus leaving him the time necessary to consolidate his power and his State. At that stage it was even said — especially abroad — that the peasants were the ones who had gained the most from the Russian Revolution, and that the Bolsheviks, despite the Marxist doctrine, were obliged to base themselves, not on the working class but on the peasant class.

But later — *in the second period* — to the extent that the State strengthened itself and in the measure that the cities, their provisions exhausted, turned their attention to the country, Lenin began to close the circle around the peasants more and more.

If the workers in the cities and the industrial regions had had, through their independent and active organizations, freedom of initiative and action, they certainly would have established direct and fruitful economic contact with the peasants for production and exchange. One can be sure that such contact between the free producers of the cities and the country would have led to alliances and finally to a practical and satisfactory solution of this basic problem of the Social Revolution — that of the

relations between the two classes of toilers, between the two essential branches of the national economy.

But, look! The workers and their organizations had no freedom of action, no freedom of initiative. And likewise the peasants had neither. Everything was concentrated in the hands of the State, of the Government. It alone could act, venture, resolve.

Under these conditions, naturally everybody awaited its decisions.

The peasants who, at the direct suggestions and proposals of the workers certainly would have done, on their own initiative, long before and in a natural way, spontaneous and simple, what was necessary for the cities, now did not move, while the Government — which was there for that purpose — did not make its intentions known.

By its presence and its very functions, a government interposes itself between the two strata of workers and separates them. Automatically, it prevents them from conferring, since it takes charge of intervening between the two as an intermediary, an arbiter.

Therefore Lenin intervened. Naturally, as a Marxist dictator he understood nothing of the real situation. He explained the indifferent attitude of the peasants, not as an inevitable consequence of the application of false governmental principles, but as a manifestation of their “egoism”, their “petty-bourgeois mentality”, their “hostility to the cities”.

He acted brutally. Through a series of decrees and ordinances, he called upon the peasants to turn over the greater part of their harvest to the State. That summons was supported by the armed forces and the police. This was the period of requisitions, of impositions, of “armed expeditions”, in short, of “war Communism”. The military violence was thrust upon the peasants in order to take from them all that the State needed.

The peasants were forbidden to sell their products. Around the railroads, on the highways, and around the cities, “barricades” were set up to prevent such selling, which the State called “speculation”. Thousands of peasants and other “citizens” were arrested and some of them were shot for violating those [anti-sales decrees]. It should be unnecessary to say that it was primarily the poor wretches who were carrying a sack of flour to a city for the sole purpose of enabling themselves to increase their daily sustenance, or else the peasants who came to help their famished relatives or friends, who were caught. The *real* big-time speculators easily “forced” the barricades by greasing palms. Once more, in a statist system, the reality mocked the “theory”.

Soon this policy led to serious disturbances. The peasants opposed the violence with fierce resistance. They hid their wheat; they reduced their crops to the proportions strictly necessary to satisfy their own needs; they killed their livestock, sabotaged the work; they took a stand against the perquisitions and requisitions here and there; they assassinated more and more frequently the “commissars” in charge of these operations.

Now the cities found themselves threatened with famine, and no improvement in the situation could be envisaged. The workers, undergoing bitter privations, understanding more and more the true reasons for this failure, and seeking to save the Revolution, began to be seriously disturbed. And part of the Army showed itself fairly disposed to support this mass movement. (It was then that there arose, in March, 1921, the great uprising in Kronstadt). The situation became critical.

Believing that the State, that is to say, all the forces of support and coercion, were insufficiently consolidated to impose its will upon the country at any cost, Lenin retreated. Soon after Trotsky’s “victory” over Kronstadt, he [Lenin] proclaimed the famous N.E.P., the “New Economic Policy”.

The N.E.P. marks *the third period* in the evolution of the agrarian problem. It was “new”, however, only in relation to the pitiless rigor and the military measures of the preceding period. It simply provided some degree of relaxation. The pressure was let up a little to satisfy the bellies of the peasants and to appease their spirits. The “new policy” granted them a certain amount of liberty in disposing of the product of their labor: notably to sell a part of it freely in the open market. The barricades were eliminated. Small traders benefited from some “liberalities”. Individual property recovered some rights.

But, for a thousand reasons, the N.E.P. did not change anything basic. It did not constitute a solution. It was a half-measure, vague and doubtful. To be sure, it cleared the atmosphere a bit. But it created, at the same time, an aspect of irresolution and disorganization. Speedily it led to confusion and contradictions heavy with consequences, both in the economic field and in the life of the country in general.

Moreover, the equivocal and unstable situation which it brought about represented a decided danger to the government’s security. Having made concessions, the Bolshevik regime admitted a certain weakness. This indirect admission raised the hopes of the bourgeois circles. It gave a new impetus to forces and elements whose activity and spirit could quickly become seditious and even perilous for the regime. This was all the more true in that the sympathies for the masses for Bolshevism had been greatly

weakened since 1917, which the Government knew very well. The eventual reawakening of the bourgeois appetites among some elements of the peasantry appeared particularly serious.

The members of the Bolshevik Party and the privileged strata already formed in the new State, and fairly influential, were afraid. They insisted that it was necessary for the government to put an end to "the pause of the N.E.P." and return to the regime of the State-employer and the State mailed-fist.

For ail these reasons Josef Stalin, the successor of Lenin, who died in 1924, felt obliged to choose between two solutions: either enlarge the N.E.P., which would mean, despite the possession of the "levers of control", opening the doors to the economic and perhaps political restoration of a private capitalistic regime — or else return to integral statism, to a totalitarian regime, and resume the offensive of the State against the peasants.

Having weighed everything, sure of the acquired power and mastery of the State, assured of the active support of the privileged strata as well as of the support of a sizeable part of the Army, completely subjugated, and of all the coercive forces of his "apparatus", Stalin finally decided in favor of the second solution. At the end of 1928 he proceeded to effect the total nationalization of Russia's agriculture: a nationalization called "collectivization", and representing *the fourth period* of the evolution of the peasant problem.

Through force of arms, through terror which before long took on unheard-of forms and proportions, the State set about taking away from the peasant who had remained a land-owner his piece of land, even though that property were middle-sized or small. Thus it gained effective and complete possession of the soil.

Prior to that operation it was necessary to distinguish in the U.S.S.R. three factors in the situation:

1. The *sovkhoz*, an abbreviation of the Russian words, "Soviet possessions", which were *exploited directly by the State*.

2. The *kolkhoz*, meaning "collective possessions", which were *exploited communally by the peasants*, working under the control and direction of the State.

3. The individual cultivator, a sort of State farmer, who, like the *kolkhoz*, then owed a part of his product to the State.

This distinction disappeared with the “collectivization”. From that time onward *all agriculture became a direct enterprise of the State, effective lord of the land*. Each “agricultural workshop” took the name of *kolkhoz*.

Every peasant was compelled by force to enter a *kolkhoz*. His piece of land and his other possessions were confiscated. And, we must emphasize, it was not only a question of the more or less well-off peasants, but also of *millions of poor farmers*, who had just enough to feed themselves, not employing help and possessing solely what was strictly necessary for their individual labor.

Since then every peasant in the U.S.S.R. has been compulsorily attached to a *kolkhoz*, as the [industrial] worker is to a factory. The State has transformed him not only into a State farmer, but into a serf, and forces him to work for his new master. And like all real masters, it leaves him, out of the product of his toil, only the indispensable minimum to maintain life. The rest, the major part, is put at the disposal of the Government. And also, like all real masters, the latter decides how this shall be made use of, without the peasant having the slightest say in the matter. True, this surplus does not go to enrich the capitalists, but there are other strata [the privileged] to enrich in the Soviet Union.

Theoretically the State “buys” the products from the *kolkhoz*. It is in this way that it remunerates the peasants for their labor. But, being the only landlord and purchaser, it pays an absurdly low price for those commodities. That remuneration is only a new form of exploitation of the peasant masses by the capitalistic State.

To understand this, it suffices to say that, according to the reports of the “Soviet” press, *the State realized, in 1936, a profit of nearly 25,000,000 rubles from the re-sale of products bought from the kolkhozes*. Again, *in 1937, the kolhhozists got only 50 per cent, of the real value of the products of their labor*. The remainder was retained as taxes, administrative expenses, various revenues, et cetera.

Nearly all of the peasant population in the U.S.S.R. finds itself today in a state of serfdom. This agricultural organization recalls the famous “military colonies” of Araktcheiev in the time of Tsar Alexander I. In fact, “Soviet” agriculture is “mechanized”, “bureaucratized”, “militarized”.

To arrive at that goal, Stalin had to use terrible methods of violence against the peasants. In many places, the countryside did not accept the announced reforms with good grace: It was recalcitrant. Stalin had expected this. He did not hesitate. Millions of peasants were imprisoned, deported, or shot for the least resistance. Detachments of “special” troops — a sort of

militarized police force — primarily fulfilled that task. In the course of these "expeditions" a number of recalcitrant or rebel villages were demolished by artillery and machine-guns and burned.

And, parallel with those upheavals, several famines devastated whole regions and carried off other millions of victims.

Finally, "might was right". There is no reason to be astonished or to be skeptical about our revelations. *We know from other examples*, such as those of Fascism and Hitlerism, *to what an extent an authoritarian regime*, armed with all !the modern methods, *can subjugate the masses*, and impose its will upon them, despite all resistance and all obstacles, *so long as the police and the Army obey it*.

Some say that the Bolshevik government had no other means to safeguard its regime, to save the country from permanent famine and other disasters worse than the remedy, to "make agricultural progress", and to "assure the march toward Socialism".

We agree — except for the goals.

Yes, *the statist, governmental process has no other means tha these*. But that is, precisely, irrefutable proof that its doctrine is erroneous and that the situation created is insoluble. *For by such means Socialism will never he achieved.*

This system can "assure" a march, not toward Socialism, but toward State capitalism, which is more abominable than private capitalism. And this system is not at all a "transitional" state, as they [the "Communists"] frequently wish to make us believe; it is simply another method of domination and exploitation. It will have to be combated as other systems, based on domination and exploitation, have been and are being combated.

As for the "progress of agriculture", we are convinced that the true progressive collectivization of this branch — as indeed of the whole economy — will have to be achieved by forces which have nothing in common with those of a statist political dictatorship.

We have said that for a while the agrarian problem became seriously complicated in the U.S.S.R. The peasant masses carried on a struggle, blind but effective, against the State-employer, and sabotaged the work of the *kolkhoz*; the agricultural output began to fall catastrophically. In order to stimulate the *kolkhozists* and to reconcile them to the system, they were then allowed, within the *kolkhoz* itself, a certain amount of individual property, very restricted, a little land, a few animals, some tools. And the

kolkhozist was permitted to work a little for himself.

The inevitable result of this measure was not slow in making itself felt: the struggle between the peasant and the State soon crystalized itself around this “private sector” (“around the cow”, they [the Russians] in the country say).

Since then the peasants have tried stubbornly to increase their “property”, their rights, and their personal work, to the detriment of the *kolkhoz*. Naturally the State has opposed this tendency. But, on the other hand, it has been compelled to spare as much as possible the “individual sector”, the output of which is superior to that of the *kolkhoz*, and which contributes largely to the State’s prosperity.

At present this strugglo and theso hesitations combine to make up the nerve center of the agrarian problem in the “Soviet” Union. It is not impossible that that domain is on the eve of a new and fifth period in its agricultural evolution.

We must note, however, that these details and others change nothing of the general picture which we have just painted.

[37] Decree of October 25, 1917. [But in the fourth paragraph of Chapter xxv Voline gives October 26 as the date of what apparently is the same decree]

[38] Milioukov, Paul, *History of Russia*, Volume III, p. 1274.

Chapter 4. Situation of the Functionaries

The third social stratum in the U.S.S.R., the importance of which has become enormous, is that of the bureaucrats, the *functionaries*.

From the moment when direct relations between the various categories of workers were suppressed, as well as their initiative and freedom of action, the functioning of the State machine, of necessity, had to be assured by intermediaries dependent on the central direction of the machine. The name which has been given to these intermediaries — — describes perfectly their role, which consists of making [something] function.

In the "liberal" countries the functionaries make function what relates to the State. But in a country where the State is all, they are called upon to make everything function. This means that they are responsible for organizing, co-ordinating, supervising; in short with making the whole life of the country, economic and otherwise, go.

In a country as immense as the U.S.S.R., this "civil army" of the State-employer must be extraordinarily large. And, in fact, *the caste of the functionaries there* has been raised to several millions. According to E. Yourievsky, cited earlier, their total number *exceeds* 9,000,000. One must not forget that in [that vast territory] there are neither municipalities nor other services or organizations independent of the State, nor any kind of private enterprise.

It goes without saying that, apart from the small subordinate employees, [the functionaries] form the most privileged social strata. In this respect only the top military ranks can equal them. The services which they render to their employer (the State) are inestimable. Along with the Army and the police, also enormous and well organized, the "Soviet" bureaucracy is a force of the first importance. Fundamentally, everything depends on it. Not only does it serve the State, organize it, rule it, make it go, and control it — but what is much more valuable, *it actively and faithfully supports the [Stalinist] regime,* on which it depends entirely.

In the name of the government which it represents, the top bureaucracy commands, dictates, orders, prescribes, supervises, punishes. And the middle and even the petty bureaucracy also command and administer, each functionary being master in the sphere assigned to him. Hierarchically, all are responsible to their superiors. The highest are responsible to the chief-functionary, the great, genial, infallible Dictator.

The functionaries give themselves body and soul to the Government, which knows how to reward them for this. With the exception of the herd of petty employees, whose position corresponds to that of the herd of [industrial and rural] workers, the "responsible" functionaries in the U.S.S.R. are the object of ceaseless concern. Good remuneration and advancement are guaranteed to all functionaries worthy of these favors. All docile and diligent functionaries are well paid, pampered, felicitated, decorated. The most devoted and zealous advance rapidly in office and may hope to attain the highest posts in the State.

But the medal has its reverse side. Basically, every functionary is an instrument, a puppet in the hands of his superiors. The least fault, error, or negligence can cost him much. Responsible only to his chiefs, he is punished by them administratively, according to their judgement, without any other form of trial. It means complete destitution, frequently prison, sometimes death. The personal caprice and despotism of the chiefs rule with no appeal.

The most terrible aspect of that situation is that often the punished functionary is only a scapegoat, his "fault" or his failure being imputable either to the defective orders of his superiors, or to general conditions, or to the policy of the Government. "Stalin is always right" — like Hitler in Germany. If there is a failure, the guilty are quickly found. Frequently also, the matter is deeply anchored in the traditions of "Soviet" bureaucracy. The guilty one falls victim to the struggle for existence: rivalry, jealousy, intrigues — these elements, inseparable from unbridled careensm, lie in wait for the functionary every moment of his life.

On the other hand, certain misdeeds in the private lives of high functionaries, going sometimes as far as debauchery, are tolerated by the Government, as one kind of necessary relaxation. The G.P.U. closes its eyes. Its chiefs participate. The famous Henrikh Yagoda was a perverted libertine. And there are still orgies in Moscow.

"To arrive" — -at any price and by any means, without letting oneself be caught: such is the greatest concern and one of the strongest stimulants in the "Soviet" Union.

From a little above the level of the gigantic herd of 150,000,000 [industrial] workers, peasants, and petty employees, every beginning functionary can, by showing himself devoutly and blindly submissive, and by knowing how to fawn and "bend the knee", attain "the good life".

It is this hope which today pushes every young citizen in the U.S.S.R. toward education and study. He aspires and hopes, like the *stakhanovist*, to

“rise from the ranks” — he, who flounders in poverty. He is ambitious for a position as a chief, a carriage, a leather brief-case, a pair of good boots, a good salary, and decorations. On such a road, he does not bother about his neighbor. He knows perfectly how to flatter, pay homage, be obsequious and servile.

To become aware of all this, one needs to follow closely all that happens in [the vast territory dominated by the Kremlin]. It is necessary to read the “Soviet” press attentively, if one is to know Russian life, mentality, and general customs. The speeches and harrangues of the chiefs, the periodic distribution of decorations, the declarations and statements of delegates to the Congress, the local news and the daily “little stories” which find their place and their echoes in the “Soviet” newspapers — all this documentation puts him who knows how to read it and understand it in touch with the situation.

According to Yourievsky, out of about 10,000,000 functionaries in the U.S.S.R., 2,000,000, or 20 per cent., are privileged. The rest lead a more or less painful existence, made tolerable only by the hope of “rising” and “arriving”.

If we gather together all of our information, we obtain the following table, the figures being approximate:

1.500,000	privileged workers out of	18,000,000
2,000,000	privileged functionaries out of	10,000,000
4,000,000	well-to-do peasants out of	142,000,000
2,500,000	variously privileged; members of the Bolshevik Party (independent of their functions), specialists, soldiers, police, et cetera.	
10,000,000	privileged of all kinds out of	170,000,000

These 10,000,000 constitute the new privileged class in the “Soviet” Union and the real support of the Stalin regime.

The rest of the population — 160,000,000 souls — are only a more or less unknown herd, subjugated, exploited, impoverished.

Chapter 5. Political Structure

In our analysis of the role of the functionaries, we touch upon the political structure of the U.S.S.R.

Politically it is governed by the high State functionaries (as France, according to a time-honored formula, is governed by the *prefects*), and administered by an innumerable army of subordinate functionaries under their command.

It remains for us to support this statement with certain indispensable details. Ahead of everything else, it is necessary to distinguish between two absolutely different elements. *The one consists of appearance*, decorations, the stage setting, (the sole heritage of the glorious October Revolution); *the other is the reality*.

In appearance, the U.S.S.R. is governed by the *soviets*. ("The Soviets everywhere!" shout the French Communists, without knowing what to believe about the "soviets", without having the slightest notion of their real history and their real role).

Nothing could be more false. The good people abroad who still believe sincerely in this myth are letting themselves be royally "rolled".

Without losing ourselves in details, let us establish the essential facts, emphasizing the characteristics that are unknown or little known.

For a very long time the Soviets (workers' councils) have not played any important role in the U.S.S.R., either politically or socially. Their use is wholly secondary, and even insignificant. They are purely administrative, executive organs, in charge of minor local duties of no importance, entirely subordinated to the "directives" of the central authorities: the government and directing organs of the "Communist" Party... *The Soviets do not have even the shadow of power.*

A great misunderstanding about the Soviets prevails outside of Russia. For many workers in other countries, the term soviet has something mysterious about it. A mass of sincere, naive people — "dopes", as the saying goes — mistaking bladders for lanterns, have faith in the "Socialist" and "revolutionary" decor of the new impostors. In Russia, the masses are forced by violence and other methods of control to accept that imposture (exactly as in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy). But millions of workers in other countries naively let themselves be hoodwinked, unaware of the fraud of which they will one day be the first victims.

Let us clear up this question of the Soviets.

Two essential facts must be emphasized:

First: The creation of the "Soviets" in Russia took place only because of the absence of other workers' organizations, under the pressing necessity of setting up mechanism for information, coordination, and common action in various factories. It is certain that if Russia had possessed labor unions and a Syndicalist movement in 1905, the idea of forming Soviets never would have arisen, and recourse never would have been had to these vague organisms, completely fortuitous and purely representative.

Second: Basically, a soviet is not an organism of tws dtass struggle, of revolutionary action. It can only be a living active cell, of the social transformation or of the new society in the process of birth. By its very structure it is a weak, passive institution, of a rather bureaucratic, or, at its best, administrative character. A Soviet can take care of certain small local duties, nothing more. *It is a sort of workers' municipal council.* But — and this is serious — because of its structure, and especially of its pretensions, it can become, under certain circumstances, an instrument in the hands of a political party or of a government, as was the case in Russia. Thus it is subject to "the political disease", and, consequently, spells a certain danger for the Revolution.

For these two reasons, *this whole famous system* of the "Soviets", product of the specific conditions in which the workers' movement in Russia found itself, *has no interest and no utility for workers in countries where Syndicalist organs, a Syndicalist movement, and a Syndicalist struggle exist; nor for countries in which the workers have had their class organizations of combat and social reconstruction for a long time; nor for countries where the laboring masses have prepared for a final direct struggle, outside the State, political parties, and any kind of government.*

In appearance, we have said, Russia is governed by the Soviets ("free emanations of the working class", according to the myth spread abroad). Theoretically today — that is, according to the old "Soviet" written constitution, the supreme power in the U.S.S.R. belongs to the Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets, convoked periodically, and having, in principle, the right to name, eliminate, or replace the Government. In principle, the Soviets hold the legislative power, and their "executives" the executive power.

But in reality it is the Government itself — the Council of People's Commissars, direct emanation of the Communist Party — which holds, in an absolute way, *all the force and all the power*, both legislative and

executive, in the country.

It is the Government that is master, not the Soviets.

It is the Government which can, if it wishes, wipe out the Congress of Soviets, or any Soviet taken separately, or any member of a Soviet in case of opposition or disobedience. For it is the Government which holds all the "levers of command".

Yet that is not all. The real government is not even the Council of People's Commissars, which is itself only an ornament, but rather the *Politbureau* (political bureau), which consists of a few top men of the C.P., members of its central committee. That isn't all either. In fact, it is the brutal and cunning chief of the party and of the central committee, the "great" and "genial" Stalin (or whoever replaces him) who *is the real supreme power*: the dictator, the *Vojd* (Duce or Fiihrer) of the country. This man can say, with much more reason than Louis XIV: "*L'Etat* (the U.S.S.R.) *c'est moi!*" ("I am the State!").

It is Stalin (or his eventual successor) who is [or will be] supported by the "areopagus (the *Politbureau*), the Council of People's Commissars, the whole party, the "candidates" (aspirants) for the party, the privileged strata, the bureaucracy, the "apparatus", the Army, and the police. For all this world depends on him, materially and morally, and only exists thanks to him. All this world believes blindly in his strength and skill in safeguarding the regime, which is constantly threatened by formless discontent and the rage — for the moment powerless — of the deceived, subjugated, and exploited masses.

It is he, the "great leader", and then the *Politburo*, the party's central committee, and the Council of People's Commissars, who impose their will on the Soviets, and not the reverse.

Some claim that Stalin and all these institutions rule *by the will of the people*: for, it is said, all the members of the Government, of the directing organs, and of the Soviets are elected, freely and secretly. But, by closely examining the mechanism and the provisions which regulate them, it is easy to see even without participating in them, that these "free and secret" elections are merely a comedy (more or less like everywhere else).

If, at the very beginning, the elections to the Soviets were relatively secret[39] — the vast masses being for the Soviets, the Government had nothing to fear on that score, and moreover, it was impossible to deceive the masses immediately — this relative freedom has not been in existence for a long time now. For years the elections in the "Soviet" Union have

been neither free nor secret, and although *this is entirely official*, it does not displease the ignorant "followers" in other countries, who have always denj«!a the facts. It is notorious, in fact, that the pretended "freedom" and "secrecy" of elections were "granted" to the people recently, by the famous "democratic Constitution" of Stalin. And the real purpose of that gesture was to appease the growing discontent in the U.S.S.R., and further, to throw dust in the eyes of foreign workers.

Henceforth Stalin and his government had the certainty of being able to remain masters of the situation, despite the "freedom" and "secrecy" of the elections. The "apparatus" of the State was sufficiently solid — and the people sufficiently subdued — so that the Government had the herd of voters at its mercy, despite the "freedoms" granted. The very text of the "Constitution" permits one to discern the calculations.

Today, in spite of all appearances, the elections are inspired, even imposed, led, organized, and supervised closely by innumerable agents of the omnipotent government. The committees, the "cells", and the other local party organs, "suggest" their ideas to the voters and impose their candidates. And there is only one list of the latter, presented by the Communist Party. There is no opposition. Who would dare to oppose this list or present another? And for what purpose would the voter "refuse to play" when such a gesture could change nothing in the situation but might lead the stubborn one to prison?

The vote is "free" and "secret" simply in the sense that the voter may manipulate his pen without anyone looking over his shoulder. But as to what that pen can put on the paper, there is no choice. His act is "pre-destined", therefore purely automatic. Thus the composition of the Soviets and their subordination to the Government are assured in advance. And the "ballot" is only another fraud.

We must remind the reader that the "Stalin Constitution" is the third since the October Revolution. The first, adopted by the Fifth Congress of Soviets in July, 1918, under Lenin, established the basis of the Bolshevik State. The second was adopted in 1924, still under Lenin. It made certain modifications and specifications which consolidated the power of the State, suppressing the last vestiges of the independence of the Soviets, the factory committees, et cetera. Finally, the third was granted by Stalin and adopted in 1936. The latter did not change anything. There were a few unimportant alterations of detail, a few vague promises, a few articles repeating "democratic" formulae, immediately contradicted by the articles which followed, and finally, the replacement of the annual Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets by a permanent superior Soviet, renewable every four years. That was all.

[39] The “dictation”, supervision, and threat existed from the beginning. Also, we must point out in passing that the People’s Commissars, and the members of the Politburo and other supreme organs, were never elected, but were appointed by the central committee of the Communist Party, influenced by the “genial Vojd”, and validated by the Congress of Soviets, docile instrument of the central committee.

Chapter 6. General View

To complete the picture that I have just sketched, here are a few last brush strokes.

The Bolshevik system wants the State-employer to be, for every citizen, the provider, the moral guide, and the distributor of rewards and penalties.

The State provides work for the citizen and assigns him to a job. The State feeds and pays him! The State supervises him; the State uses and manipulates him as it likes; the State educates and trains him; the State judges him; the State recompenses or punishes him. So [in one embodiment we find] employer, provider, protector, supervisor, educator, instructor, judge, jailer, and executioner — all these [embodied] in a State, which, with the help of its functionaries, wants to be omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. Let him who seeks to escape it, beware!

We want to emphasize the point that the Bolshevik State (the Government) not only possesses all the material and moral goods in existence, but, what is perhaps, much more serious — it has made itself also the perpetual repository of all truth, in all fields, historic, economic, political, social, scientific, philosophical, and others. In all fields, the Bolshevik government considers itself infallible and called upon to lead humanity. It alone possesses the truth. It alone knows where and how to direct. It alone is capable of leading the Revolution properly.

Then, logically and inevitably, it claims that the 175,000,000 people who inhabit the Russian domain also must recognize it as the only bearer of the truth, infallible, incontrovertible, sacred. And logically, inevitably, any individual or group who dares not combat that government, but simply doubts its infallibility, criticizes it, contradicts it, or blames it for anything at all, is regarded as its enemy and therefore as an enemy of the truth, and of the Revolution — a “counter-revolutionary”.

This involves a complete monopoly of opinion and thought. Any opinion, any thought, other than that of the State (or of the Government) is held to be a heresy: dangerous, inadmissible, criminal. And logically, inescapably, the punishment of heretics follows: prison, exile, execution.

The Syndicalists and the Anarchists, ferociously persecuted *solely because they dared to have an independent opinion of the Revolution*, knew what this meant.

As the reader can see, that system is truly that of *absolute slavery of the*

people — physical and moral slavery. It is, if one likes, a new and terrible *Inquisition on a social level*. Such is the work achieved by the Bolshevik Party.

But did the Bolsheviki seek this result? Did they come to this deliberately?

Certainly not. Beyond doubt, the party's best representatives hoped for a system which would have permitted the building of real Socialism and would have opened the way of integral Communism. They were convinced that the methods preconceived by their great ideologists were going to lead there infalliblyX/More-over, they believed that all means were good and justified, if they would lead to that goal.

They were deceived, those sincere ones. They took a false path. It was for this reason that some of them, perceiving the irreparable error and not wishing to survive their vanished hopes, committed suicide.

Naturally, the conformists and the careerists adapted themselves.

I must mention here an admission made to me, some years ago, by an eminent and sincere Bolshevik, in the course of a heated and passionate discussion. "Certainly," he said, "we have made mistakes and become involved in ways which we neither wished nor expected. But we will try to repair our errors and get out of the *impasse*, and regain the right road. And we will succeed."

On the contrary, one can be certain that they will not succeed For the logical force of events, general human psychology, the linking of material factors, and the determined chain of causes and effects are, in the last analysis, more powerful than the will of a few individuals, no matter how strong and sincere they may be

Ah, if millions of free men were deceived, if it was a question of powerful collectives acting in full freedom, and in complete agreement, it might be possible by a common effort of will to repair the mistakes and redeem the situation. But such a task is impossible for a group of individuals placed above and outside the subjugated and passive human mass, confronted by gigantic forces which dominate them.

The Bolshevik Party seeks to build Socialism by means of the State, of a government, and of political action, centralized and authoritarian. But it can iead only to a monstrous and murderous State capitalism, based on the odious exploitation of the "mechanized", blind, unconscious masses.

The more it can be demonstrated that the leaders of the party were sincere, energetic, and capable, and that they were followed by vast masses, the

better can the historical conclusion about their work be drawn. Thus:

Any attempt to achieve the Social Revolution with the help of a State, a government, and political action — even though that attempt is very sincere, very energetic, favored by circumstances, and supported by the masses — *will lead inevitably to State capitalism, the worst form of capitalism, which has absolutely nothing to do with the march of humanity toward a Socialist society.*

Such is the lesson for the world to be drawn from the tremendous and decisive Bolshevik experiment, a lesson which lends powerful support to the libertarian thesis, and which, in the light of events, will soon be understood by all those who labor, suffer, think, and struggle.

Chapter 7. Achievements

Despite the numerous works and studies containing abundant documentation and irrefutable details of the pretense of “Soviet achievements”, many persons continue to believe obstinately in this myth. For many such pretend to know and understand things without examining them closely, and without taking the trouble to read what has been published [about the questions before them].

Various naive individuals, with complete confidence in the statements made by partisans of the U.S.S.R., sincerely believe that the marvelous “achievements” of the only “Socialist State” prepare the ground for the coming of true and integral Communism.

But we who know that country, we who follow closely what is happening there, and what is revealed there, can appreciate the real value of the Bolshevik “conquests” and their “feats of valor” up to the present.

A profound and detailed analysis of that value is not our theme, but we must reply, at least briefly, to five pertinent and natural questions:

1. Does State capitalism, to which, according to the admissions of sincere Communists themselves, Bolshevism has led in Russia, achieve at least significant results from the purely industrial, agricultural, or cultural point of view?

2. Does it make progress in these fields?

3. Has it succeeded in giving an impetus to a country which was backward industrially, technologically, politically, and socially?

4. Could it, one day, by reason of the progress made, facilitate the social transformation and the transition to the Socialist society of tomorrow?

5. Can this State capitalism be regarded as a transitional stage [on the road] toward Socialism, an inevitable and indispensable stage in a country such as Russia was before the Revolution?

Many of [their defenders] contend that, under the existing conditions, the Bolsheviki did the maximum possible. By reason of the rudimentary state of industry, technology, and the general education of the masses, they aver, the only conceivable goal in this country was the installation in power of an intellectual elite which, by compulsion, would force the people to make

up for the retardation, create a powerful industry, a modern technology, a progressive agriculture, and an exemplary educational system.

This task [the argument of the defenders continues] was the only one that could be attempted. And it was indispensable in Russia. The Bolsheviks were the only ones to understand this and to consecrate themselves resolutely to it, not stopping for any reason nor for any obstacle. And they were completely, right in mercilessly sweeping away all those who might have Werfered with that preparatory work. For the immediate future of the country and also that of Socialism in general depended on these necessary and urgent achievements.

The preceding chapters, we hope, give reason to reflect on ihe soundness of these assertions.

We complete our broad exposition with a few facts, figures ind precise statements.

An excellent method for discovering *the real achievements* and *the real situation* of the Bolshevik State exists. But only if one knows the country, its history, its language, its customs, and especially only if one knows how to read the Soviet press. It is regrettable that, except under these essential conditions, such investigation is hardly practicable outside of Russia.

This method is that of scanning regularly the newspapers which appear in Russia, particularly *Izvestia* and *Pravda*.

The Bolshevik government knows very well that, except in a few instances, these papers are not being read abroad. Counting, on the one hand, upon ignorance of what is really happening in the U.S.S.R., and on the other hand, upon the effects of its immense and intensive propaganda, the Stalin regime feels itself amply protected from inopportune revelations. Forced to admit and explain certain weaknesses to its own population, it may do it in full security. Therefore it tolerates certain admissions in its newspapers, while controlling, naturally, their object, their appearance, and their scope.

From admission to admission, the regular and attentive reader of the Soviet press inevitably reaches enlightening conclusions.

In studying the Russian newspapers, the following features especially should occupy the attention of the researcher:

1. Editorials.

2. Reports of congresses, and particularly the delegates' speeches.

3. Local reportage and correspondence.

4. Summaries.

The editorials and principal articles, written to order and always developed according to the same model, have for years assumed the same invariable character.

Each article begins with a hymn to “achievements” effected. In such and such a field, it asserts, as a rule, we have made giant strides. Everything is going marvelously. “The Party and the Government” (a sacred formula, repeated many times in each article) have made such and such a decision, have applied such and such a measure, or promulgated such and such a decree. Therefore we are sure (it slips imperceptibly into the future tense) that, from now on, this or that *will be done*; that, in the very near future, such and such progress *will be made*; that directly such and such a result *will be achieved*, et cetera.

This part makes up two thirds of the article. Then unfailingly comes a “but”, a “however”, or a “nevertheless”.

But, the article continues, the Party and the Government are obliged to state that, according to the latest reports received, the present achievements are still far from attaining the necessary results; that, at present, only this or that has been done. And there follow figures and data in astonishing disproportion to the forecasts.

The further you read, the more you realize that while the future is going to be splendid the actual present is deplorable; negligence, serious errors, weaknesses, impotence, disorder, confusion are usually cited in such an article. And it is sure to continue with desperate appeals: “Forward! Faster! It is necessary that we regain control of ourselves! It is high time that production increased! Less waste! Let those responsible be called to order! The Party and the Government have done their duty. It is up to the workers to do theirs, et cetera.” Often, too, the article concludes with threats against the unfortunate “responsible parties” and those who remain deaf to the appeals of the Party and the Government in general.

Nothing is more typical of the Soviet press than this aspect. It has been repeated day after day for 20 years.

Reports of the congresses [of the various divisions of the U.S.S.R. political system] are notably edifying if one takes the trouble to scan closely the speeches of the delegates.

All those delegates of course belong to the privileged working-class

“aristocracy”. All these speeches resemble one another like drops of water.

Each speech begins with an immoderate glorification of Stalin: the great, the genial, the well-loved, the venerated, the superman, the wisest man of all peoples and all centuries. Then each delegate declares that in his region — or his field — unheard-of efforts are being made to fulfil the orders of the Party and the Government, and to please the adored *Vodj*. Then they hold out beautiful promises for the future. Finally, they nearly all servilely enumerate all that the Party and the Government have already done “for the workers”. By way of example, the delegate usually cites his own case.

This part of the speech is generally the most curious. Working zealously, and having scored these results, the delegate says, he has been able to win such and such an advancement, which has enabled him now to have a stylish home, nice furniture, a phonograph, a piano, et cetera. And he hopes to do still better in order to attain a way of life even more agreeable.

“He is eminently right, our great Stalin,” the delegate cries. “Life in the U.S.S.R. is becoming happier, more comfortable every day.” Frequently he concludes his speech on a note that is naive to the point of absurdity: “The authorities have promised me, as a recompense for my efforts, this or that (a fine bicycle, for instance). The promise has not yet been kept, but I am waiting patiently, with confidence in my government...” (Prolonged applause from the congress).

The purpose of these speeches, deliberately inspired, is clear. They say to the workers: “Work with zeal, obey the authorities, venerate your *Vodj*, and you will manage to rise from the herd, and create for yourself a genteel, bourgeois existence.”

And this propaganda bears fruit. The desire to “rise” stimulates the energies of thousands of individuals in the “Soviet” Union. The example of those who “rise” redoubles this energy. The dominant caste makes its profit. But Socialism? Have patience, poor dupes.

And the reporting, local correspondence, and summaries enable us to get an approximate and suggestive idea of a multitude of daily facts, of those “little nothings” which in reality compose and characterize existence.

At the end of such a study, one becomes sufficiently clear about the social level and real spirit of “the first Socialist country”. Naturally, of course, the study of this documentation must be completed by the reader with the scanning of magazine articles, statistics, et cetera.

What, then, are our conclusions about the concrete achievements in the

U.S.S.R.?

Ahead of everything else, there exists a field in which the “Soviet” power has beaten all records — that of propaganda: more precisely, that of lying, deception, and bluff.

In this field the Bolsheviks have revealed themselves as past masters,[40] Commanding all avenues of information, publicity, [and communication], they have, on the one hand, surrounded the country with a veritable protective wall across which they allow to pass only what corresponds to their plans, and, on the other hand, they utilize every possible means to maintain an incredibly powerful enterprise of imposture, trickery, stage setting, and mystification.

This deceitful propaganda all over the world is of a scope and intensity without equal. Considerable sums of money are devoted to it. Throwing dust into the eyes [of other peoples] is one of the principal tasks of the Bolshevik State. Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books, photographs, moving pictures, radio, expositions, demonstrations, “testimonies” — all methods, one more tricky than the next — are employed.

Undeniably, the “Soviet” government makes large use of direct or indirect subsidies abroad. Among the “Friends of the Soviet Union”, for example, there are writers who are “friends” primarily because this title permits them to sell their literary output in the U.S.S.R. or to gain other advantages.

But propaganda by word having proved insufficient, the Bolshevik government has masterfully organized *deception through fact*.

No one may enter the Russian domain without special authorization, which is exceedingly difficult to obtain, unless one gives certain guarantees of sympathy for the regime. No one can travel through the country freely, nor examine independently what interests him. On the other hand, the Government has patienhyand meticulously set up a showy facade. It has rigged up a great display of promises to show to the dazzled world. It sets up this scaffolding on every occasion. The “workers’ delegations”, authorized to spend a few weeks in Russia from time to time, and abominably duped (if their members are sincere), serve its purpose. And the same is true of the overwhelming majority of “tourists” or isolated visitors who travel in that country under the vigilant eye of spies, without being able to understand what is really going on around them.

Factories, collective farms, museums, canteens, and parks for sport, play, and rest are all prepared in advance, in special places, and tricked out in

such a way that the poor traveler remains dumbfounded without becoming aware of the imposition. And even when he sees something really good or beautiful, he does not realize that it concerns only the 10,000,000 privileged persons and not at all the 160,000,000 exploited proletarians.

If the bourgeoisie of other countries also have recourse to “window dressing”, Bolshevism uses “super-window dressing”, so that in our times still, and despite the testimony of sincere witnesses, millions of workers in all the other lands do not know the truth about the U.S.S.R.

Let us pass on to other achievements.

Here we shall deal with the bureaucracy, the new bourgeoisie, the Army, and the police.

We already know that the Bolshevik State has succeeded in developing with dizzying speed a tremendous bureaucracy, unequaled and incomparable, a bureaucracy which alone forms today a privileged “aristocratic” caste of more than 2,000,000 individuals. It has succeeded also in dividing the population of the “Socialist” State into at least 20 categories of wage-earners. And they have reached an inequality of social conditions never before existent in private capitalist States. The lowest categories receive from 100 to 150 *rubles* a month. The higher categories receive 3,000 *rubles* and more.

The “Soviet” Union includes a State *bourgeoisie*, a *bourgeoisie* which lives luxuriously, possessing sumptuous villas, with carriages, and servants, et cetera.

The Bolshevik State has militarized the ranks of the directing party itself, by forming, especially from among the Bolshevist youth a “special Army corps”, a sort of State police. And it was with the help of such a special corps that the Lenin government stamped out the revolutionary uprising in Kronstadt in 1921, and with the same aid, the Stalin regime pitilessly drowns in blood the strikes, demonstrations, and revolts which occur in the country from time to time, but of which, naturally, the Bolshevik press does not breathe a word.

Such as it was — chained, castrated, bureaucratized, bourgeoisi-fied, regimented, corrupted, and petrified — the Russian Revolution, as we have said, was powerless to impose itself upon the world. The Bolsheviki ended by realizing this. They understood, too, that under these conditions, they almost inevitably, soon or late, would have to do so with the same method that served them in imposing themselves upon Russia — armed violence.

From then on, they applied themselves relentlessly to the forging of the indispensable instrument of this method: a powerful modern army. Their mining production and their heavy industry particularly were brought into play to carry out this project. The task was achieved to a certain extent. They ended by creating a regular army, patterned after all the armies in the world, mechanically disciplined, blindly devoted to the Power, secured by ranks and decorations, well fed, well dressed, and equipped with the "last word" in materiel. This army has become an imposing force.

Finally. Bolshevism knew how to form a powerful police force, partly regular, but primarily secret, a police force which is perhaps the best in the world, since it has succeeded up to now, in keeping down a subjugated, deceived, exploited, and impoverished population. *It has known how, especially, to raise spying to the level of a civic virtue.* Every member of the Communist Party — even every loyal citizen — is expected to help the G.P.U., to point out suspicious cases to it, to spy, to denounce.

In the last analysis, the Bolshevik power has succeeded in reducing to complete slavery 160,000,000 individuals, for the purpose of leading them one day — by an infallible method, it claims — to freedom, prosperity, and real Communism. Meanwhile, with its administration wholly bureaucratized, with its etonomy totally nationalized, and with its professional army andrk§»mnipotent police, *this power has managed to create a bureaucratic, military, and police State par excellence, a model of a totalitarian State*; an incomparable dominating and exploiting mechanism; a real capitalist State.

All these "feats of valor" and "achievements" are undeniable.

What can be said of the others?

Before we do anything else, we must establish, unequivocally, that, according to the admissions of the Bolshevik authorities themselves, admissions which were forced, indirect, but adequately precise, *the [carrying out of] the three greatest tasks of the Russian capitalist State have been a complete fiasco.* Those tasks were:

1. The famous "industrialization" of the country.

2. The celebrated "five-year plans".

3. The tremendous "collectivization of agriculture".

To be sure, they have imported into the U.S.S.R. an imposing array of machines, apparatuses, and equipment of all kinds. They have erected modern houses in certain large cities, and in certain places, workers'

homes, which, however, are very badly built. They have achieved, with the help of foreign engineers and technicians, a few gigantic constructions such as the Dnieprostroi dam, the Magnitogorsk furnaces, the vast Sverdlovsk machine works, and the famous Bielooserski canal. Finally, they have resumed — after a stoppage due to the years of stress — mining exploitation, the production of oil, and the regular functioning of factories. But any regime or nation would have done this under penalty of disappearing [if it did not].

For us the problem has an entirely different meaning. In all that has been accomplished by the Bolshevik State, can one see real achievements that are of interest from our point of view? Can one observe a real general progress of the nation, a progress which puts it on the road to the emancipation, both social and cultural, of the laboring masses, on the road to Socialism, to [real] Communism? Does the activity of the Bolshevik government create in the country an indispensable condition for such an evolution? Has it really achieved a rough sketch of a new society? That sums up the whole problem.

The industrialization of a country can be really productive and progressive only if harmonized with its general and natural development. And such industrialization can be useful socially only if it is in harmony with the whole economic life of the nation, and if, consequently, its effects can be usefully assimilated by the population. In the contrary case, it may lead to impressive, but socially useless, building.

One can erect all that one wishes when one possesses certain means and especially if there can be recourse to enslaved labor, submissive to the commands of the State-employer, and paid by the latter as it sees fit. The [solution of the] problem, however, does not consist of effecting mechanical achievements but of being able to put them at the service of the goal pursued.

A forced industrialization, imposed upon a population which is not prepared for it from any point of view, cannot fulfil this necessary role. To want to industrialize from above a country with a labor populace which is only a downtrodden, inert, miserable herd, is to want to industrialize a desert.

In order that a country be industrialized effectively, it must possess one of two essential elements: either an energetic, powerful, and rich bourgeoisie or a population that is master of its own fate — that is to say free, conscious of its needs and of its acts, desirous of progress, and determined to organize itself to attain it. In the first case, the bourgeoisie must command a market capable of rapidly absorbing the output of

industrialization. In the second, this assimilation and the industrialization are assured by the powerful enthusiasm of the whole population on the march toward progress.

The Russian Revolution suppressed the bourgeoisie. The first condition, therefore, did not exist at that time. The second remained. It was necessary to give free scope to the collective evolution of a people of 170,000,000 individuals, *a people spontaneously ready to accomplish a tremendous social experiment*: to build a society on an absolutely new basis, not capitalist and not statist. *It was necessary, simply, to help* that people to achieve the experiment.

Immense technical progress being an accomplished fact in the world, and a rapid industrialization and an abundance of products also being, in our time, materially possible, there were no insurmountable obstacles that a powerful human collectivity, carried away by a prodigious ardor, and aided by all the mature forces available, could not have overcome and have reached the desired goal. Who knows what the world would be like today if this course had been followed?

But the Bolshevik Party was completely unaware of that task. Having seized the vacant throne, it wanted to substitute itself for the ousted *bourgeoisie* and the free creative mass. It suppressed both conditions to replace them with a third: dictatorial power, which stifled the real breath of the Revolution — the boundless enthusiasm of millions of human beings for the cause — which dried up all the living sources of real progress, and barred the way to the effective evolution of society. The result of such an error was inevitable: “mechanism”, a mechanism without life, without soul, without creativity.

We know today, on the basis of exact and irrefutable data, that, except for the military sector, the Bolshevik “industrialism” led, in the overwhelming majority of cases, to all sorts of sterile installations and constructions, especially in so far as the real, economic, social, and cultural progress of a people was concerned.

We know that 75 per cent, of all these huge buildings remain without purpose, and either do not function at all or function badly.

We know that the thousands of machines imported from abroad are for the most part rapidly put out of commission, abandoned, or lost.

We know that the present labor force in the U.S.S.R., a labor force that is only a herd of slaves working reluctantly and in a brutalized way for the profit of the State-employer, does not know how to handle those machines,

nor how to use them, and finally, that the population does not get any benefit from them. Only the equipment of the Army has been improved, to a certain extent.

We know that the people — 160,000,000 individuals out of 170,000,000 — live in terrible conditions of poverty and moral brutalization.

The pretended "industrialization" of the U.S.S.R. is not a praiseworthy accomplishment. It is not an "achievement of the Socialist State", but *a State-capitalist enterprise*, forced, after the failure of "war Communism" and then of the N.E.P., to play its last card. That consists of deluding its own subjects, and also the people of other countries, by the fictitious and illusory grandeur of its projects, in the hope of maintaining itself "until better times".

The "industrialization" of the U.S.S.R. is just a bluff, nothing more. Likewise the "five-year plans" are nothing but an immense bluff, following that of the "industrialization". On the basis of precise facts and figures, we hold that these plans have been a total failure. This is beginning to be recognized almost everywhere.

As for the "collectivization", we already have said enough about that. The reader has seen what it represents in reality. We repeat that such "collectivization" can never be the real solution of the agrarian problem. It is far from being Socialist, or even a social, achievement. It is a system of useless and absolutely sterile violence. We contend that the peasant will be won over to the cause of the Social Revolution only by means which have nothing in common with this return to medieval serfdom, in which the feudal lord is replaced by the State lord.

Could one construct, let us say, not Socialism, but simply a healthy and progressive economy, on such a basis?

Let us look at a few facts and figures concerning the five-year plans.

In 1939 the U.S.S.R. announced the results of the third five-year period.

Through the run of the first two such periods, the Soviet press complained unceasingly of considerable delays in the execution of the plans. Extraction of coal and other minerals, exploitation of oil wells, metallurgical production, textile production, the progress of heavy industry and all other industries, extension of railroads and improvement of their rolling stock — in short, economic activity in all fields was greatly below the quotas and the forecasts. Passing from one five-year period to another, [the various industries] remained far behind the results expected.

The genial dictator raged, arrested, executed.

But *lzvestia* was forced to admit, indirectly, in a series of articles (appearing in August-November, 1939), the failure of the [economic plan for the] third period. That journal stated that steel and iron production in October, 1939, was below that of October, 1938; that the output of all the branches of the metallurgical industries had fallen off; and that several blast furnaces had to be shut down for lack of coal and metal.

The situation became critical to such a point that at the end of September the Soviet press ceased to report the monthly figures.

According to the data published in that press, the locomotive works, in the course of the first two five-year plans, realized only 50 per cent, of their quotas. The number of freight cars was increased by a number greatly below the official forecast. The fabulous enterprises such as Dnieprostroi and Magnitogorsk functioned badly. Several of those enterprises underwent long stretches of enforced inactivity. The gigantic projects of electrification were achieved only to an insignificant degree.

The People's Commissar, Kossyguin, declared in May, 1939, that the country's textile enterprises were poorly equipped and technically inadequate to operate at the necessary level of production. And he complained of a lack of contact between the textile industry on the one hand, and the producers of raw material on the other.

"The textile enterprises do not receive enough linen, hemp, or wool. Yet great quantities of flax rot in the fields. The hemp harvest waits indefinitely to be made into thread. And as for wool, the elementary rules of sorting and cleaning are neglected in its preparation, which greatly handicaps the making of cloth. And one may say the same thing about the preparation of silk cocoons."

Thus one could cover pages and pages with precise facts and figures, appearing in the Bolshevik press, and pertaining to all fields, to prove incontestably the failure of the five-year plans.

In describing the lamentable condition of all the Soviet industries, one has an embarrassment of choices.

According to the admissions of *Izvestia* (in several of its issues in January, 1940) the coal mining industry doesn't know how to use the new machines. That is one of the reasons for the insufficient output.

The Bolshevik papers of July 30, 1939, were given over largely to *Railroad Transport Day*. Admissions therein are exceptionally edifying. [Some of

them follow].

Generally, rails are supplied by the [plants] in very inadequate numbers, and their quality is bad. Four big plants make rails in the U.S.S.R. For some time they have stopped making rails of first quality. So the railroads must be content with those of second or third class. But of these up to 20 per cent, are unusable.

When tracks were being repaired in July, 1939, the great Kuznetski works suddenly stopped all delivery of rails. The reason? Lack of equipment for boring holes. And in general, indispensable spare parts for repair work were not sent out, which held up all such work.

Three huge plants which make various parts for railroads very often interrupt delivery because of lack of steel, of tools, or for other reasons. One case was cited where a plant was short only 180 *poods* (three and a quarter tons) of metal. Nevertheless, all deliveries were held up, and the railroads were short 1,000,000 repair parts.

Frequently, too, the plants deliver certain parts, and neglect to provide others, equally indispensable. The rails are on hand, but they rust away and deteriorate for lack of fishplates, for example.

The authorities have raged in vain. The Government has sent out an S.O.S. call and fixed “responsibility” in vain. All these measures remain ineffective and the official reports are compelled to state, from time to time, that one of the reasons for all those rieficiencies is “*the absence of all interest, of all spirit, among the laboring masses*”. According to admissions by competent agencies, me indifference of the workers approaches sabotage. And they also speak of “excessive centralization”, of “bureaucracy”, of “general negligence”.

But to talk doesn’t mean to remedy. No remedy exists. Instead, it is necessary to condemn the whole system.

According to other admissions by the Bolshevik press, the extraction of all minerals as well as of naphtha suffers from lack of organization. Output in these fields remain low, despite the use of machines (which are frequently in very bad condition), and despite all official measures. *Pravda*, in certain issues in December, 1939, stated that coal production in the Urals was steadily falling. And about the same time the papers complained of an inextricable mess in the chemical industry.

Elsewhere we learn that the “Red Proletariat” plant, which, Pravda says, is in the advance guard of the metallurgical industry, manages to produce

only 40 per cent, of its quota, “because of great technical and administrative disorder”.

We could continue citing examples into infinity.

In all fields, the industrial situation in the U.S.S.R. has always been lamentable, and remains so in our day. *Industrialization is only a myth. There are machines, but there is no industrialization.*

Concerning the “collectivization”, one could cite volumes with illuminating data taken from the Soviet press.

We will simply cite a few facts, culled at random from the Russian papers.

Dealing with the harvest of 1939, *Socialist Agriculture* for August 8 states that everywhere work is very much delayed, and often to the endangerment of the crops. In places, too, the harvest is nearly non-existent. According to the agricultural section of the Communist Party’s central committee, the main reason for this is *insufficiency of technical means*, due, in its turn, to *negligence, disorganization, heedlessness, and delays of all sorts*. For instance, the indispensable parts for machines in use do not arrive in time, or come in inadequate quantities.

Erection of repair shops is greatly behind schedule everywhere. For example, a center which contracted to build 300 workshops by a certain date, completed only 14. Another built only eight out of 353 promised. And in the Kursk distridt only three repair shops out of 91 planned have been completed.

Moreover, the same periodical explains, the harvest work this year (1939) is in difficulties because great quantities of wheat have been battered down by inclement weather. And instructions about j adapting the machines to thresh fallen wheat are always lacking.

Finally, the agrarian paper continues, the force of skilled harvest workers has been considerably diminished this year because, in many places, the machine operators and mechanics have not yet been paid for last year. Why? The answer is that these workers are paid only after the *kolkhoz* has paid its taxes. And in many places those taxes are yet to be paid.

Izvestia and *Socialist Agriculture* both said that in 1939, because of all these mishaps, 64,000,000 hectares of wheat less than in 1938 would be harvested by August 1.[41]

The Soviet press in November, 1939, complained of considerable delays in the harvesting of potatoes and other vegetables. This was laid to lack of

men and horses, inadequate deliveries of gasoline, and especially to negligence by the *kolkhozniki* (members of the co-operative).

Izvestia for November 4 admitted that by October 25 the *sovkhoz* had made only 67 per cent, of their obligatory grain deliveries; that the *kolkhozes* had fulfilled only 59 per cent, of their mandatory payments; and that, by the same date, only 34 per cent, of the quota of potatoes and 63 per cent, of other vegetables had been supplied by the *kolkhozes* to the State.

In July, 1939, a Congress of State Cattle Breeders in the Ukraine reported: 1. That there were then many *kolkhozes* without any cattle (45 per cent, in Khirguisie, 62 per cent, in Tadjiki, 17 per cent, in the Ryazin district, 11 per cent, in that of Kirovsk, and 34 per cent, in the Ukraine); 2. That a great many *kolkhozes* possessed an insufficient number of cattle, and that, in the Ukraine, nearly 50 per cent, of those collective farms had less than 10 cows each ("only just enough so that one can smell a cow a little" the reporter jokes); 3. That, in general, the number of head of cattle has greatly diminished in the U.S.S.R. since the collectivization.

And the most curious thing is that, as everywhere else, no really frank, practical, and effective measure can be devised. Need one continue?

These facts, these admissions, and these complaints have prevailed for 20 years. And in many other fields in the "Soviet" Union, one could also pursue this enumeration into infinity.

In the U.S.S.R. those circumstances are given notable attention. One conforms the necessary extent to the requirements of the authorities, and — "one gets on as best one can".

Abroad, until recently, nothing of this was known. Now the truth begins to be revealed ....

The latest measures taken by the Bolshevik government to stimulate the activity of the *kolkhozes* are typical.

In the summer of 1939 certain official literature, for example, *The Constructive Work of The Party, No. 10*, asserted that the essential evil of the Soviet system was "the slight interest of the farmer in doing high quality work and in obtaining good harvests". Inspired from above, the press got busy on this subject.

And in January, 1940, *Izvestia* declared that "the Party and the Government" had made a decision to enhance the economic interest of the collective farmers. Toward that end, it explained, "each collective farmer must be assured that any increase in the harvest effected by him will

remain at the disposal of the *kolkhoz* and serve to imprcve its economy." (This had not been the case previously). And it added that it was exceedingly important to "develop the creative initiative of the mass of collective farmers."

Finally, in a decree dated January 18, 1940, the Party's central committee and the Council of People's Commissars accorded the *kolkhozes* a certain amount of economic independence. Each *kolkhoz* was given tie right to establish its own crop plan — which, naturally, must always be "validated by the official authorities".

Obviously it is unnecessary to point out that that sort of collective farm N.E.P. will come to nothing. It is only a maneuver of the Stalinist regime due primarily to its reverses in the Finnish War, and practically negated by the whole situation. Moreover, the peasant mass is fully aware of this machination; it received the "reform" with utter indifference.

We have touched upon it here because it shows the true nature of Bolshevist "collectivization".

In general this pretended, forced, "collectivization", undertaken for the purpose of subjugating the peasants completely to the State and representing a new form of serfdom, cracked in all its parts. What we have just seen leaves no doubt on that score.

And the Soviet press is compelled to insist more and more upon the seriousness of the struggle between the "individual sector" and the "socialist sector" in the agriculture of the U.S.S.R. The latter is neglected, abandoned, and openly sabotaged by the peasants on the slightest pretext and by a thousand methods. Finally, the situation is regarded as being "exceedingly serious". The few seeming concessions are attempts to awaken in the collective farmers an interest in their *kolkhozes* and to combat the tendencies contrary to that interest.

But there cannot be the slightest question that these attempts will fail. The struggle of the peasants against serfdom will continue.

Having dealt with the material side of the U.S.S.R. story — the economic, industrial, and technical aspects — let us look at certain other fields which may be called *spiritual*.

Three points need special clarification:

1. The problem of educating the people.

2. The emancipation of women.

3. The religious problem.

I regret that I am not able to dwell at length on each of these topics. But such a task would require too much space, and is not the purpose of this work. So I shall confine myself to establishing certain essential characteristics.

For years the ignorant and the interested have pretended that, having found the Russian domain in a state of complete, almost “savage”, ignorance, the Bolsheviki have made “giant strides” on the road of general culture, training, and education. Foreign travelers, having visited one large Russian city or another, tell us of marvels that they have seen “with their own eyes”.

Have I not heard it stated, with the utmost assurance, that before the Bolsheviks stepped in “there were hardly any public schools in Russia,” and that today “there are splendid ones nearly everywhere there”? Have I not heard it said by a lecturer that “before the Revolution there were only two or three universities in the country and that the Bolsheviks have created several”? Do they not say that before the Bolsheviks nearly all the Russian people did not know how to read or write and that now such total illiteracy has almost disappeared? Do they not say — I mention it only as an example of the ignorance and false assertions concerning Russia — do they not say that under the Tsars the [industrial] workers and peasants were forbidden by law to receive secondary and higher education?

As for the travelers, it is true that they can observe and even admire, in the larger cities of the U.S.S.R., some beautiful modern schools, well equipped and well organized — in the first place, because such model schools are fixtures in all the great cities of the world (a visitor could have made the same observation in Tsarist Russia); in the second place, because the installation of such schools is part of the decorative and demonstrative program of the Bolshevik government.

But it is clear that the situation in a few large cities proves nothing about the conditions in the countryside, especially in a land as vast as the “Soviet” Union. A traveler there who wanted to arrive at conclusions based on the truth would have to see things and follow their development from day to day, for at least several weeks, in the depths of the country, in various small cities, in the villages, on the collective farms, and in factories far from the great centers. But what traveler who may have had such an idea has been able to obtain authorization to do anything about it? As for the myths of the sort just described, we already have shown their real worth in other parts of this work.

No one contends that the training and education of the Russian people was sufficiently widespread prior to the Revolution. (Indeed, it was not adequate in any country. There was merely a difference of details and shades). No one claims that the number of persons who couldn't read or write in Tsarist Russia was not very large and that popular instruction there was not very back- 1 ward in comparison to certain Western nations, but between that and the statements I have just quoted there is a considerable gap.

It is fairly simple, however, to establish the exact truth.

Before the Revolution the network ofprirnary, secondary, and higher schools in Russia was already fairly impressive, although not adequate. It was primarily the teaching which was defective: the programs, methods, and means were lamentable. Naturally, the Government was unconcerned with the real education of the people. As for the municipal and private schools, supervised by the [Romanov] authorities, and compelled to follow the official curriculum, they could not accomplish much, though they did effect some achievements.

But the purported "enormous progress" of the Bolshevik regime [in the educational field] actually was mediocre. To be convinced of this it suffices, as in other matters, to follow the official Soviet press closely. As elsewhere, its lamentations and admissions on this theme, for years, have been highly eloquent.

Let us examine a few more or less recent citations:

According to the general declarations and official figures, teaching in the U.S.S.R. is going forward in a more than satisfactory manner. The number of pupils in the primary and secondary schools attained, in 1935–36, the imposing figure of 25,000,000; the number of students in the higher schools was raised to 520,000. In 1936–37 the respective figures were 28,000,000 and 560,000. Finally, in 1939,[42] the score was 29,700,000 and 600.000. Neatly 1,000,000 students received technical training — industrial, commercial, agricultural, et cetera. The courses for adults throughout the country were numerous. And desire for education was intense.

Of course it is natural that a government arising from a revolution and pretending to be popular would try to satisfy the aspirations of the people for a good education. It is normal that this regime should submit the national educational system to fundamental reforms. Any post-revolutionary government would have done as much.

But in judging the work of the Bolshevik government intelligently, the official quantitative figures are not enough. *The real problem is how to discover what the quality and the value of this new education is.* It is necessary to question whether that gov-evnment has succeeded in organizing education to assure good, serious, valuable, and solid training. And it is essential to know whether the training and education in the U.S.S.R. are capable of developing men who can create a new life, militants for Socialist activity.

To these fundamental questions the Soviet press itself, by its admissions through the years, has replied in the negative.

First, we must state that education in the Russian domain is not adequate for everyone. In fact, *higher education is not free*.[43] The majority of students [in the higher schools] are on State scholarships. And the others? A sizeable number of youths are deprived of higher education which thus becomes a privilege depending upon the pleasure of the Government. And there are other defects much more serious.

For years the same statements and complaints [about education] have repeatedly appeared in the columns of the Soviet newspapers, notably these:

1. The Government has not yet succeeded in producing a sufficient quantity of school books. The bureaucracy, centralism, administrative slowness, et cetera, prevent it. (The president of the directing committee of the higher schools, a certain Kaftanov, had to admit in a speech[44] that the higher schools were completely without text-books. A si all quantity was finally published in 1939, but a goodly part of these were merely reprints of pre-revolu-tionary volumes).

2. The same compl; int, from year to year, about school equipment. Its scarcity, cr its exceedingly bad quality, seriously impedes the work of education.

3. The number of school buildings is [appallingly] insufficient. I It increases very slowly, which creates a grave obstacle to real educational progress. And the existing edifices are in a wretchedly bad state, and those newly constructed — always in haste and carelessly — are defective and rapidly deteriorate.

However, the defects mentioned are not the most important.

A much more profound evil paralyzes the work of education in the U.S.S.R.

— *the lack of teachers and professors*.

Ever since 1935 *Izvestia, Pravda*, and other Soviet journals have abounded in admissions and tears in connection with this subject. According to those admissions, the organization of a teaching force does not at all correspond to the country's needs. In 1937, for instance, only 50 per cent, of "the plan" for teachers was fulfilled.

Hundreds and sometimes thousands of teachers are lacking : in some districts. But that is not all. Those who exercise the teaching function are far from being duly qualified. Thus about two thirds of the secondary school teachers have not had a university training. Likewise two thirds of the elementary teachers lack secondary education.

The Soviet press complains bitterly of the crass ignorance of the teachers, and cites numerous astounding examples of their incompetence and ineptness.

To sum up — in reality, training and education in the U.S.S.R. ! are in a lamentable state. Outside of the great cities and the artificial facade, there are not enough schools, teachers, equipment, or text books. The school buildings lack elementary facilities for hygiene and often lack heating. In the depths of the country, popular education is in a state of incredible abandonment. It amounts to absolute chaos.

Under these conditions are not the pretended "90 per cent, of the population" who are more or less literate simply another myth?

The Soviet press itself answers this question. From year to 1 year it speaks of the absence of the most elementary education, and of a very low cultural level, not only among the masses of people, but among the student youth, teachers, and professors.

All efforts of the Government to remedy this state of affairs have not succeeded. The general circumstances, the very basis of the Bolshevik system, constitute insurmountable obstacles to any effective improvement of the situation. The whole tendency of the Russian educational set-up prevents its success. For it disseminates propaganda, rather than providing education or training. It fills the heads of the students with the rigid doctrines of Bolshevism and Marxism. *No initiative, no critical spirit, no freedom to doubt or to examine, is tolerated.*

All education in the U.S.S.R. is permeated with a scholastic spirit: moribund, dull, curdled. The general lack of freedom of opinion, the absence of all independent action or discussion, and therefore the absence

of all exchange of ideas in a land where only the Marxist dogma is allowed — all this prevents the people from getting any real education.

The travelers — observers necessarily superficial, and often naive — admire the cultural and sport institutions which they have seen "with their own eyes" during a few quick official visits to Moscow, Leningrad, and two or three other cities.

But note what we find in the journal *Trud*:[45]

The miners of the Donetz Basin put the following questions to the governmental authorities there: "What is the use of the levies made on our wages for the purpose of maintaining the 'Palace of Culture' in Gorlovka?"[46] (The fact that this protest was published was a rare circumstance).

In 1939 (the miners declared) the cost of maintaining that institution reached several million *rubles*. The budget of the "Miners' Club" alone amounted to 1,173,000 *rubles*. Out of this sum, 700,000 were paid to the motion picture industry for the rental of films which no one came to see because of their bad quality. The other 400,000 *rubles* went for maintenance of the personnel. As for the miners, they did not profit at all from the money they were obliged to pay out.

The "Palace of Culture", (the miners' complaint continues), is surrounded by a garden solemnly called "the Park". A considerable sum of money has been deducted from their wages to fix up this garden. With that money a huge entrance gate has been erected, a gate flanked by several concrete turrets. But [those in charge of the project] forgot to build a wall around the garden. The garden is there with its luxurious entrance, but without a wall. No one profits from it, for it is in a state of abandonment.

Also "they" have erected a theater, a platform, a shooting gallery, even a bathing place. But none of these installations function for the miners. They are there only to show the latter the ease with which the responsible officers of workers' organizations waste the money of the workers. These officers have laid out for themselves a little garden, a private corner called "the Garden of the Miners' Committee". But the miners themselves — the workers who paid for the "Palace", the "Club", the "Park", and the "Garden of the Miners' Committee" — they have only the dusty streets of Gorlovka at their disposal.

By a [seeming] miracle, this complaint found its way into the columns of *Trud*. One must suppose that for some reason the authorities could not refuse this publicity to the miners, and that it had been decided in high

places to right their complaint and apply penalties. But it is certain that for one such case publicized, thousands of others remain unknown.

A stifling dogmatism, absence of all individual life, of all free spirit, of all moral enthusiasm; a lack of vast and passionate perspectives; the rule of the barracks spirit, of a suffocating bureaucracy, of flat servility and careerism; desperate monotony of an empty and colorless existence, regulated in even the slightest details by the mandates of the State — such are characteristics of education and "culture" in the U.S.S.R.

Who can be astonished that, according to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Young Communist Truth),[47] a profound disillusionment and a spirit of "dangerous" boredom have invaded the ranks of that country's student youth? Their whole environment exercises a depressing influence on the young.

And according to certain admissions in the Soviet press, a great number of the students attend their courses only because of compulsion, and with no real interest in them. Many of them pass their nights playing cards.

The following lines were found in the diary of a young student:

"I am bored. I am terribly bored. Nothing significant or remarkable, neither among men or events. What am I waiting for? Good, I will complete my course. Good, I will be an engineer. I will have two rooms, a stupid wife, an intelligent brat, and 500 *rubles* a month salary. Two meetings a month. And then? ... When I ask myself if I would feel any regret about leaving this life, I answer: No, I shall leave it without great regret."

Much noise has been made about "the emancipation of women by the Bolsheviks". Real equality of the sexes, abolition of legal marriage, freedom of women to dispose of their bodies, and the right to abortion — all these "beneficences" have been sung and glorified by the advance-guard press of all the nations.

These "achievements" also belong to the realm of myths. The reader knows that ideas about the equality and freedom of the sexes," with all of the practical consequences, were harbored a long time ago — long before the Revolution — by the advanced Russian circles. Any government stemming from the Revolution was obliged to take account of and sanction that state of affairs.

So there was nothing specifically Bolshevik in this development. The attainments of the Bolshevik government actually occupy only a very modest place. Incontestably that regime wanted to apply the principles

enunciated. But again, the essential question is: *Did it succeed?* And again, we could fill pages — supported by documented facts — to demonstrate that it has failed lamentably, and that its own system, with its practical consequences, has compelled it to let everything go, to retreat, to retain only the myth and the bluff.

Legal marriage has *not* been abolished in the U.S.S.R. Instead, it has been simplified, or, rather, it has become civil, while before the Revolution it was compulsorily religious. It must even be noted that divorce, which, while civil, is regulated by a series of pecuniary conditions and penal measures.[48]

Examining the marriage registry, one finds a large proportion of weddings concluded between very young women and old but highly placed men. This proves that in the U.S.S.R., as everywhere else, and more so, marriage is a "business", and not a free union of love, as the Bolsheviki would have it believed. And that is entirely natural so long as the capitalist system, under another form, remains intact in that domain. Only the form has changed; the basis and all of its effects remain.

Having failed in their attempt to construct a Socialist State, and having succeeded in building a capitalist State (the other State can be imagined), the Bolsheviks were obliged, as in all other fields, to retreat in everything that concerns the relations between the sexes: family, children, et cetera.

This was inevitable. [*The situation in that field could be modified only if the whole society were to be changed fundamentally*. If that whole is not made over completely, if only the form changes, then all the customs, including the relations between the sexes, [and concerning] the family and children do not change either, except formally. Fundamentally, they remain what they were previously, while changing in appearance.

That is what happened in the U.S.S.R. Beginning with the month of May, 1936, all the "advanced principles" were discarded little by little. A [new] series of laws regulated marriage, divorce, the responsibility of spouses, et cetera.

This legislation has purely and simply re-established, although under new forms, the basis of "the bourgeois family". Free disposal of their bodies has been forbidden to women. Right to abortion has been strongly restricted. Today it is permitted only in exceptional cases, on the advice of a physician, and under specified circumstances. Abortion, and even the suggestion of it, if it takes place without legal authorization, is severely punished.[49]

Prostitution is widespread in the U.S.S.R. To be convinced of this, and also of the low level of "Soviet" customs in general, one merely needs, regularly and minutely, to run through the daily news summaries, the local correspondence, and kindred departments in the Russian press.

As for "equality of the sexes", that principle having prevailed for a long time in advanced Russian circles, the Bolsheviki naturally accepted it. But like the other glorious social or moral theses, it has been perverted, in its turn, as a result of the general deviation of the Revolution. Concretely, in the U.S.S.R., it is a question of "equality" in work, not in wages. The woman works the same as the man, but she receives lower pay. Therefore this "equality" permits the State to exploit the woman even more than the man.

Let us dwell briefly on the important subject of religion.

It is argued that the Bolsheviks were right about religious prejudices. This is an error, the source of which, again, is ignorance of the facts.

The Bolshevik government has succeeded, through terror, in suppressing public worship for a time. As for religious *sentiments*, far from having extirpated them, Bolshevism, with its methods and its "achievements", and in spite of its propaganda, has, on the contrary, either rendered them, more intense, among some, or simply transformed them among others.

Before the Revolution, and especially after 1905, religious sentiments were in a state of decline among the popular masses, which did not fail seriously to worry the popes[50] and the Tsarist authorities. Bolshevism succeeded in reviving them under another form.

Religion will be killed not by terror, not by propaganda, but by the effective success of the Social Revolution with its happy consequences. The anti-religious seeds which fall upon the fertile soil of that success will give it a bountiful harvest.

The objection is sometimes made to me that the Bolshevik government has done all it could to achieve such and such a success, and that it is not its fault if its efforts have not been crowned with total success.

Precisely. The more the good will of that regime can be demonstrated, the more will it become clear that the real Social Revolution and real Socialism cannot be achieved by the governmental and statist system.

"The Communist government, on its part, has used all of its good will to succeed," it is said to me.

I do not say the contrary. But the problem is not that. It is not a question of knowing whether the Government wanted or did not want to do this or that. It is a question of knowing whether it succeeded. The more it is proved that a government has not succeeded despite all of its good will, the more it becomes clear that a government could not succeed.

“The Government could not do any more.”

Then why did it prevent other elements from trying? If it saw that it was impotent, it had no right to forbid others to act. And who knows what those other elements might have been able to achieve?

Why did the Government not succeed?

“The backward state of the country prevented it. The backward masses were not ready.”

But nothing is actually known about this, since the Bolsheviki deliberately prevented the masses from acting. It is as though one were astonished because someone could not walk after someone else had tied his feet.

“The other elements of the left did not want to co-operate with the Bolsheviks.”

But those elements did not want to submit blindly to the orders and exigencies of the Bolsheviki, which they considered evil. Then they were prevented from speaking and acting.

“The capitalist encirclement...”

Exactly — *the capitalist encirclement could impede a government* and make it degenerate. *But it never could have prevented or caused to degenerate the free action of millions of men*, ready, as we have seen, to achieve, with prodigious enthusiasm, the real Revolution.

To speak of a “betrayal of the Revolution”, as Trotsky does, is an “explanation” outside, not only of any Marxist or materialist conception, but of the more ordinary common sense.

How was this “betrayal” possible, and the day after such a beautiful and complete revolutionary victory?

That is the real question.

In reflecting, in examining the situation closely, the least initiated wiil understand that this alleged “betrayal” did not fall from the sky; that it was

the “material” and rigorously logical consequence of the very manner in which the Revolution was conducted.

The negative results of the Russian Revolution were only the conclusion of a certain process. And the Stalinist regime was only the inevitable resuit of the procedures used by Lenin and Trotsky themselves. What Trotsky calls “betrayal” is in reality the unavoidable effect of a slow degeneration due to false methods.

Precisely: the governmental and statist procedure leads to “betrayal”, that is, to the bankruptcy which today permits “betrayals” — the latter being only a striking aspect of this bankruptcy. Other procedures might have led to other results.

In his blind partiality (or rather, in his inconceivable hypocrisy) *Trotsky commits the most obvious of confusions*, unpardonable in his case; *he confuses the effects with the causes*.

Crudely deceiving himself (or pretending to fool himself, lacking other means to defend his thesis), he takes the effect (betrayal by Stalin) for the cause. An error — or rather, maneuver — which permits him to overlook the essential problem: What made “Stalinism” possible?

“Stalin has betrayed the Revolution.” That is simple. It is, however, too simple to explain anything at all.

Nevertheless, the explanation is plain. “Stalinism” is the natural result of the bankruptcy of the real Revolution, and not inversely; and the bankruptcy of the Revolution, to carry the thought further, was the natural consequence of the false course on which Bolshevism led it.

In other words, *it was the degeneration of the thwarted and lost Revolution which led to Stalin, and not Stalin which made the Revolution degenerate.*

When attacked by the disease, the revolutionary organism could have resisted it victoriously by means of the free action of the masses; but since the Bolsheviks, guided by Lenin and by Trotsky himself, had taken from them all means of self-defense against the evil, inevitably the latter ended by invading the whole organism and killing it.

The “betrayal” was possible, for the laboring masses did not react either against its preparation nor against its accomplishment. And the masses did not react because, totally subjugated by their new masters, they swiftly lost both the meaning of the real Revolution and all spirit of initiative, of free action and reaction. Chained, subjugated, dominated, they felt the uselessness — what am I saying? — the impossibility, of all resistance.

Trotsky participated in person in reawakening the spirit of blind obedience among the masses, of dull indifference to everything that went on “above”. The masses were beaten, and for a long time. From then on, any “betrayal” became possible.

In the light of all this, we invite the reader to use his own judgement about the Bolshevik “achievements”.

[40] Compared to them, the Nazis are only modest pupils and imitators.

[41] A hectare is equivalent to 2.471 acres. Which means that the shortage of wheat in the U.S.S.R. in 1939 was estimated at 158,144,000 acres.

[42] *Pravda* for May 31.

[43] See Stalin Constitution, Article 125.

[44] *Pravda*, May 31, 1939.

[45] No. 168, July, 1939.

[46] Gorlovka is an industrial locality in that basin.

[47] October 20, 1936.

[48] See *Izvestia*, June 28, 1936.

[49] See the law of May, 1936, enactment of which was followed by numerous arrests.

[50] Orthodox priests in Russia are commonly referred to as “popes”.

Chapter 8. Counter-Revolution

The creative impotence of the Bolshevik government, the economic chaos into which Russia was plunged, the despotism and unheard-of violence, the bankruptcy of the Revolution, and the tragic situation which resulted from it provoked first a far-flung discontent, and later wide-sweeping backwaters, and finally forceful movements against the insupportable state of affairs imposed by the dictatorship.

As always in such cases, those movements came from two opposite poles — from the side of Reaction, from the “right”, which hoped to regain power and re-establish the old order, and from the side of the Revolution, from the “left”, which hoped to redeem the situation and resume revolutionary action.

We shall not dwell long upon the counter-revolutionary movements — on the one hand, because they are more or less well known, and on the other, because in themselves they are only of secondary interest. Such movements are the same in all great revolutions.

Nevertheless, some aspects of these movements are sufficiently instructive so that they should not be passed over in silence.

The first resistances to the Social Revolution in Russia (in 1917 and 1918) were very limited, rather local, and relatively harmless. As in all revolutions, certain reactionary elements immediately took a stand against the new order, trying to nip the Revolution in the bud. The vast majority of the [industrial] workers, peasants, and members of the Army being (actively or passively) for this new order, these resistances were quickly and easily broken.

If, later, the Revolution had known how to show itself really fertile, powerful, creative, and just; if it had known how to solve satisfactorily its great problems and open new horizons for Russia and perhaps for other countries, [the opposition] certainly could have been confined to those skirmishes, and the victory of the Revolution would not have been threatened. Too, subsequent events in Russia and elsewhere would have taken a turn much different from what we have witnessed for twenty years.

But, as the reader knows, Bolshevism, installed in power, perverted, chained, and castrated the Revolution. First it rendered it impotent, sterile, empty, and unhappy — and then gloomily, ignobly, tyrannically, uselessly, and stupidly violent. Thus Bolshevism ended by disillusioning, irritating,

and disgusting larger and larger segments of the population. We have seen in what manner it strangled the workers, suppressed freedom, and wiped out the other movements. And its action of terror and cruel violence toward the peasants led them also to oppose it.

We must not forget that, in all revolutions, the bulk of the population, the simple apolitical people, the citizens pursuing their trades from day to day, the petty bourgeoisie, a part of the middle bourgeoisie, and a goodly number of the peasants at first remain neutral. They observe, hesitate, and wait passively for the initial results. It is important for the Revolution to be able to "justify itself" in the eyes of these elements as speedily as possible. If not, all such "lukewarm" people will turn away from the revolutionary work, become hostile to it, begin to sympathize with the counterrevolutionary machinations, support them, and render them much more dangerous.

Such is the situation especially during huge upheavals which involve the interests of millions of men, profoundly modifying social relations and doing it by means of prodigious suffering and with great promises of satisfaction. *This satisfaction must come quickly*. Or, *in any event, the masses must be able to hope for it*. If not, the Revolution weakens and the counter-revolution gets going.

Manifestly the active sympathy of these neutral elements is indispensable for the effective progress of the Revolution, for they include many "specialists" and professional men — skilled workers, technicians, intellectuals. All those people, who are not exactly hostile to the Revolution once it had been accomplished, will turn toward it and help it enthusiastically *if it manages to inspire them with a certain confidence, if it makes them feel its capacities, its possibilities, and its perspectives, its advantages, its strength, its iruth, and its justice.*

But if that condition is not attained, all such elements end by becoming open enemies of the Revolution, which is a serious blow to them.

One can well believe that the vast laboring masses, carrying out a free activity with the aid of the revolutionists, would know how to achieve convincing results, and hence would know how to reassure and finally attract these neutrals.

The dictatorship — impotent, arrogant, stupid, and viciously violent — does not achieve such results, and drives those people to the other side.

Bolshevism does not know how to "justify" itself, nor how to "justify" the Revolution. As we have seen, the only great problem which it succeeded in

solving — indifferently, and under pressure from the Russian Army, which refused to fight — was that of the war. That success — the achievement of peace — won the confidence and the sympathies of the masses. But that was all. Soon its economic, social, and other impotence made itself felt. In fact, the sterility of its methods of action, governmental procedures, and statist absolutism revealed themselves almost on the day after victory.

The Bolsheviki and persons who sympathize with them like to invoke the "terrible difficulties" that their government had to surmount, after the war and the Revolution, in a country like Russia. And it is on the basis of these difficulties that they seek to justify all the Bolshevik procedure.

One might influence, with such arguments, the foreign public which doesn't know the facts. But the individuals who lived through the Revolution eventually became aware [of certain realities]:

1. That the evil methods of Bolshevism arose not so much from the difficulties encountered as from the very nature of the Bolshevist doctrine;

2. *That many of those difficulties arose specifically because the Government, from the beginning, set about stifling the free activity of the masses*;

3. That the real difficulties, instead of being smoothed over by the Bolsheviks, were greatly increased by them;

4. That these difficulties could have been surmounted easily by the free action of the masses.

The principal difficulty was certainly that of provisioning and rationing. To advance the Revolution, it was necessary to pass, ; as quickly as possible, from a regime of scarcity and an "exchange" economy (based on money) to a regime of abundance and a "distributive" economy, without money.

Yet the more important and the vaster the difficulties, the less a government could show itself capable of solving them; the more severe and thorny the situation, the more it would have to depend on the free initiative of the people. But, as we know, the Bolshevik regime monopolized everything: ideas, initiative, methods, and action. It instituted an absolute dictatorship ("of the proletariat"). It subjugated the masses, it smothered their enthusiasm. And the greater the difficulties, the less it permitted the "proletariat" to act.

It was not astonishing that despite the purported "industrialization" of its famous "five-year plans", Bolshevism did not know how to come to grips

with these difficulties, and that it was driven, in its desperate struggle against the exigencies of life, to the most odious violence, which simply emphasized its real importance. It is not by means of forced industrialism imposed on a mass of slaves that [a nation] can reach abundance and build a new economy.

Intuitively the Russian masses felt the necessity of passing to other forms of production and of transforming the relations between production and consumption. More and more did they perceive the vital need and possibility of doing away with money and of inaugurating a system of direct exchange between the agencies of production and those of consumption. Repeatedly, here and there, they were even ready to make efforts in that direction. It is highly probable that if they had had freedom of action, they would have been able to arrive progressively at a real solution of the economic problem: the distributive economy. It was necessary to let them seek, find, and act, while guiding and helping them like true friends.

But the Lenin regime did not want to hear anything about that. The Bolsheviks pretended to do everything themselves and to impose their will and their methods. Intuitively at first, and more and more clearly later, the masses became aware of the inefficiency and impotence of the Government, and of the danger into which the dictatorship and the violence was leading the country.

The psychological result of such a state of affairs is easy to comprehend. On the one hand, the populace turned away more and more from Bolshevism; disillusioned, they abandoned or grew hostile to it. The discontent, the spirit of revolt, increased with each day.

But, on the other hand, the masses did not know how to get out of the *impasse*. No valid solution presented itself, all ideological movements, ali discussion, all propaganda, and all free action having been forbidden. Tiie situation seemed to them insoluble. They did not have any way of acting. Their organizations had been nationalized, and militarized. The slightest opposition was severely repressed, and arms and all other material means were in the hands of the authorities and the new privileged stratum which had known how to organize their imposition [of authority] and their defense. [In the face of those circumstances the populace], though increasingly rebellious, did not see any possibility of undertaking effective action.

The counter-revolution which was lying in wait did not fail to take advantage of this situation and this spirit. Assiduously, it sought to turn to its advantage both that spirit and current events. Thus the more and more

general and profound popular discontent served as a basis for far-sweeping counter-revolutionary movements, and supported them for three years.

Great armed campaigns were launched in the Southern and Eastern regions of Russia, plotted by the privileged class, supported by the bourgeoisie of other countries, and directed by generals of the old order.

Under the new conditions, the vast uprising in 1919–1921 took on a much graver character than the spontaneous and relatively insignificant resistance of 1917–18, such as the sedition of General Kaledin in the South, that of the *ataman* Dutov in the Urals, and others.

In 1918–19 several serious rebellions, on a large scale, were attempted here and there. Among these were the offensive by General Yudenitch against Petrograd in December, 1919, and the counter-revolutionary movement in the North, under the aegis of the "Tchaikovsky" government there.

Well organized and well armed and equipped, the forces of Yudenitch reached the gates of the capital. Here they were easily destroyed by outbursts of enthusiasm and devotion and the remarkable organization of the laboring masses of Petrograd, with the aid of detachments of sailors from Kronstadt, outbursts vigorously supported by upheavals behind the enemy lines. The young Red Army, commanded by Trotsky, participated in the defense of the city. The Tchaikovsky movement succeeded in invading the district of Archangelsk and a part of that of Vologda. As elsewhere, its defeat was not effected by the Red Army. Spontaneous uprisings of the laboring masses, both on the spot and behind the front, put an end to it.

It is notable that that movement, supported by the foreign bourgeoisie, likewise encountered the resistance of the Western working class. Strikes and demonstrations against all intervention in Russia — especially strikes in British ports — disturbed that bourgeoisie, which did not feel secure at home, and made it withdraw its aid.

More important, however, was the insurrection led by Admiral Kolchak in the East, in the summer of 1918. Among other help, it had the support of a Czecho-Slovakian army, formed in Russia. It is notorious that Trotsky's Red Army was powerless to break this movement. It, too, was liquidated by a fierce partisan resistance of armed industrial workers and peasants, and by uprisings in the rear. The Red Army arrived "triumphantly" — after the job was done.

All these counter-revolutionary movements were more or less actively supported by the moderate Socialists — the Mensheviks and the right

Social Revolutionaries.

It was at the time of the Czecho-Slovakian offensive that the Bolsheviks, to avert additional complications, and fearing an eventual rescue, executed, on the night of July 16–17, 1918, the former Tsar Nikolai II and his family, who had been deported to Ekater-inenburg, in Siberia. That city was later evacuated by the Bolsheviki.

The precise circumstances of this execution remain fairly mysterious, despite a meticulous investigation conducted by a jurist at Kolchak's order. It is not even known specifically whether these official killings [which took place in a cellar] were ordered by the central authorities in Moscow, or by the local Soviet. And as for the Bolsheviks themselves, they keep silent.

In that period the Russian populace, not yet disarmed by the Lenin regime, and retaining its confidence in the Bolsheviks' revolution, energetically resisted the counter-revolutionary movements and put an end to them with comparative facility.

But this situation changed completely at the end of 1919. The masses, disillusioned about and disgusted with Bolshevism (and disarmed by the "Soviet" government) no longer offered the same resistance to counter-revolutionary attempts. And the leaders of those movements now knew how to play on their sympathies perfectly. In their leaflets and manifestoes they declared that they were fighting only against the despotism of the Bolsheviki. They promised the people "free Soviets" and the safeguarding of the other principles of the Revolution that were scoffed at by the Lenin government. (Of course, once victory was achieved, they had no intention of keeping these promises, but would subdue all revolts).

Thus the two great "White" uprisings in the center of the country, that of Gen. Anton Ivanovich Denikin and that of Baron Peter Wrangel, could assume such proportions that they were on the point of overthrowing the regime.

The first of these movements, directed militarily by General Denikin, rapidly invaded the whole Ukraine and a sizeable portion of central Russia in 1919. Breaking and routing the Red troops, this White Army reached the city of Orel near Moscow. The Bolshevik government was getting ready to flee when, to its great surprise, Denikin's Army suddenly lost its footing and retreated precipitously. The threat to Moscow was ended; the situation was saved. But again, the Bolsheviks and their Army did not play any part in this collapse.

General Wrangel led the second movement that was exceedingly dangerous

for the Lenin regime. He followed Denikin's uprising. Wrangel, more artful, was able to learn several lessons from the defeat of his forerunner, and won deeper and more solid sympathy than the latter. Moreover, the spiritual decline [of the Russian populace] was further advanced.

But Wrangel's movement, like that of Denikin, and various others of lesser importance failed.

That of Denikin went to pieces with strange suddenness. Having reached the gates of Moscow, his Army abruptly left everything and retreated in disorder to the South. There it disappeared in a catastrophic debacle. Its remnants, wandering across the country, were wiped out one after another by detachments of the Red Army, coming from the North on the track of the fugitives, and by partisans.

For at least 24 hours the Bolshevik government in Moscow, overcome by panic, could not believe that Denikin's troops had retreated, since they did not understand the reason for it. They got an explanation much later. Finally convinced, they sent some Red regiments in pursuit of the Whites. Denikin's whole movement was destroyed.

Wrangel's effort, beginning some time later, achieved several great successes at first. Without being able to threaten Moscow, it nevertheless worried the Lenin regime much more than Denikin's expedition. For the Russian populace, more and more disgusted with the Bolsheviks, seemed not to want to offer serious resistance to this new anti-Bolshevik drive; it remained indifferent.

But because of this almost general indifference, the Government could count on its own Army less than ever.

However, after those early successes, Wrangel's movement folded up like all the others.

What were the reasons for these almost "miraculous" reversals, for the final defeat of campaigns which began so successfully?

The real causes and the exact circumstances of those fluctuations are little known, [largely because] they have been deliberately distorted by-biased authors.

Chiefly, the reasons for the downfall of the White movements were the following:

First, the awkward, cynical, and provocative attitude of the leaders. Having captured [certain areas of Russia] they installed themselves in the

conquered regions as veritable dictators, no better than the Bolsheviks. Uusually leading a dissolute life, and likewise incapable of organizing a healthy society, swelled with pride, and full of mistrust of the workers, they brutally made known to the latter that they intended to restore the old regime, with all of its “beauties”. The alluring promises of their manifestoes, issued on the occasion of their offensives simply for the purpose of winning over the population, were quickly forgotten.

These gentlemen did not even have enough patience to wait for complete victory. They threw off their masks before they were secure, with a suddenness which soon revealed their real designs. And these boded nothing good for the masses. The White terror and savage reprisals, with their usual retinue of denunciations, arrests, and summary executions without trial and without mercy began to take place everywhere.

Moreover, the former landed proprietors and industrial lords, who left voluntarily or had been driven out with the advent of the Revolution, returned with the White armies and made haste to regain possession of their “property”.

Thus the absolutist and feudal regime of the past had suddenly reappeared in all of its hideousness.

Such an attitude [on the part of the White leaders] swiftly provoked a violent psychological reaction among the laboring masses. They feared the return of Tsarism and of the pomest-chiki, the big land-owners, much more than Bolshevism. With the latter, in spite of everything, they could hope to achieve some improvements, a redressing of wrongs, and finally “a free and happy life”. But they could hope for nothing from the return of Tsarism. So it was necessary to block its path directly. The peasants, who at that time, had profited at least in principle by the expropriation of the available land, especially were terrified at the idea of having to restore those lands to the former owners. (This spiritual state of the masses explains, to a large extent, the momentary solidity of the Bolshevik government: of the two evils they chose the one which seemed to them the lesser).

Thus the revolt against the Whites was resumed immediately after their ephemeral victories. As soon as the danger was realized, the populace began to resist anew. And the partisan detachments, created in haste and supported by both the Red Army and by the working multitude, which had recovered its understanding, inflicted crushing defeats on the Whites.

Notably, the army which contributed most to the destruction of Denikin’s and Wrangel’s commands was that of the insurgent peasants and workers

of the Ukraine, known as the Makhnovist Army from the name of its military chief, the Anarchist partisan Nestor Makhno. Battling in the name of a free society, that army had to fight simultaneously against all the forces of oppression in Russia, against both the Whites and the Reds.

Speaking of the White reaction, it was Makhno's popular Army which compelled Denikin to abandon Orel and beat a precipitous retreat. And it was that same army which dealt an overwhelming defeat to the rearguard and the special forces of Denikin in the Ukraine.

As for Wrangel's armed forces, the fact of their first serious reversal, suffered at the hands of Makhno's army, was admitted to me by the Bolsheviks themselves, under rather curious circumstances.

During the period of Wrangel's furious offensive, I was in a Bolshevik prison in Moscow. Like Denikin, Wrangel beat the Red Army and drove it rapidly Northward. Makhno, who at this time, was warring against the Bolsheviki, decided, in view of the grave danger which the Revolution faced, to offer peace to them and lend them a hand against the Whites. Being in a bad way, the Bolsheviki accepted, and concluded an alliance with Makhno.

Immediately the Anarchist leader threw his forces against Wrangel's army and defeated it under the walls of Orekhov. The battle over, before continuing the struggle and pursuing Wrangel's retreating troops, Makhno sent a telegram to the Government in Moscow, announcing the victory and declared that he would not advance another step unless it set free both his adjutant Tchubenko and myself. Still having need of Makhno, the Bolsheviks agreed and liberated me. On that occasion they exhibited his telegram and praised the great fighting qualities of this partisan.

In ending my comments on the rightist reactions, I must emphasize the falsity of certain legends invented and spread by the Bolsheviki and their friends.

The first is that of the foreign intervention. According to the legend, that intervention was highly important. It is primarily in this way that the Bolsheviks explain the strength and success of some of the White movements. ,

That assertion, however, belies the reality. It is a gross exaggeration. In fact, the foreign intervention during the Russian Revolution was never either vigorous or persevering. A modest amount of aid, in money, munitions, and equipment: that was all. The Whites themselves complained bitterly of [its paucity] later on. And as for detachments of troops sent to

Russia, they always were of minor significance and played almost no tangible part.

That is easily understood. In the first place, the foreign bourgeoisie had enough to do at home, both during and after the European war. Then, too, the military chiefs feared the "decomposition" of their troops from contact with the revolutionary Russian people. So such contact was avoided as much as possible. Events showed that these fears were well founded. Without speaking of the French and British detachments, which never came to fight against the revolutionaries, the troops of the Austro-German occupation (after the Brest-Litovsk treaty), fairly numerous and protected by the Ukrainian government of Skoro-padsky, quickly decomposed and were won over by the Russian revolutionary forces.

I also would like to emphasize, in this connection, that the result of the German occupation confirmed the Anarchist thesis at the time of the peace of Brest-Litovsk. Who knows what the world would be like today if, at that time, the Bolshevik government, instead of dealing with the German imperialists, had let the Kaiser's troops penetrate into revolutionary Russia? Who can say whether the consequences of such penetration would not have been the same as those which later caused Denikin, Wrangel, the Austro-Germans, and all the rest to disappear?

But behold! Any government always means for the Revolution : the political way, stagnation, mistrust, reaction, danger, misfortune.

Lenin, Trotsky, and their colleagues were never revolutionaries.

They were only rather brutal reformers, and like all reformers and politicians, always had recourse to the old bourgeois methods, in dealing with both internal and military problems.

They had not confidence in either the masses nor in the real Revolution, and did not even understand it.

In trusting these bourgeois statist-reformers with the fate of the Revolution, the revolutionary Russian workers committed a fundamental and irreparable error.

The explanation of everything that has happened in Russia since October, 1917, lies at least partly in this.

The second widespread legend is that of the important role of the Red Army. According to the Bolshevik "historians", it defeated the counter-revolutionary troops, destroyed the White offensives, and won all the victories.

Nothing could be more false. In all the big counter-revolutionary offensives, the Red Army was beaten and put to flight. It was the Russian people themselves, in revolt and only partially armed, who defeated the Whites. The Red Army, invariably returning after the blow (but in full force) to lend a hand to the already triumphant partisans, simply gave the *coup de grace* to the already routed White armies and crowned itself with the laurels of victory.